

WILD WEST



A MAGAZINE CONTAINING STORIES, SKETCHES Etc. OF WESTERN LIFE.

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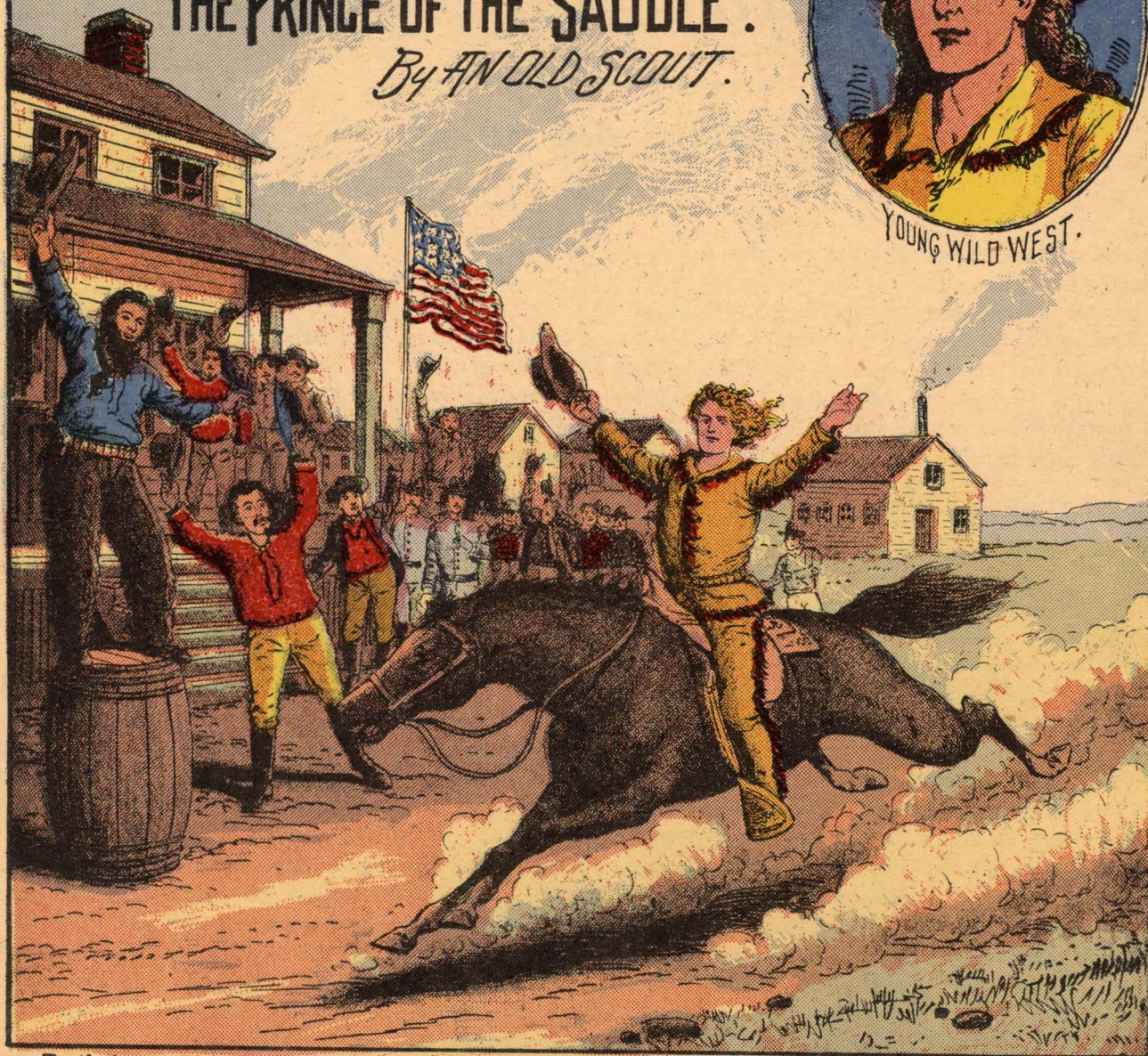
NEW YORK, OCTOBER 24, 1902.

Price 5 Cents.

YOUNG WILD WEST:

THE PRINCE OF THE SADDLE.

By AN OLD SCOUT.



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Young Wild West, THE PRINCE OF THE SADDLE.

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CHAPTER I.

TAMING A WILD HORSE.

Some years ago, when the State of Wyoming was an almost trackless territory, about thirty-five or forty men of the border were gathered in a bunch on the level prairie in range of the guns of Fort Bridger.

From the fort and the adjacent grounds many blue-coated soldiers of Uncle Sam were watching the group with great interest.

At irregular intervals the group of men would scatter, and whoops and peals of laughter would ring out on the breeze.

The cause of it all was that a wild horse was being broken to the saddle, or rather the border men were trying to break him.

The master of ceremonies was a tall man of perhaps thirty, who was as straight as an arrow and as supple as a willow. A wealth of raven black hair hung over his shoulders, and his dark, flashing eyes betokened nothing but honesty and fearlessness.

This man was Cheyenne Charlie, one of the most famous scouts and Indian fighters of the great West.

Much has been written of this man, but for his real record one must read the letters from the various army officers he served under while employed as a Government scout.

The writer had the pleasure of looking over these documents a few months ago, and it was from the famous scout himself that the facts upon which this story is based were gleaned.

"I shot a man who ran a newspaper down in Missouri for writin' me up," Cheyenne Charlie took pains to impress on the mind of the writer, "so be careful an' not put me down as a hero. I never was a hero, but I knows one when I see him. Ther only real hero I ever did know was Young Wild West, ther Prince of ther Saddle."

From this remark the conversation drifted farther, and it finally resulted in our meeting "Young Wild West" in Wyoming; hence the story.

The wild horse that the men were trying so hard to break was one of a herd that had been brought from the plains of northern New Mexico. It was a beautiful sorrel stallion with a flowing mane and a tail that swept the ground.

Cheyenne Charlie had bought the steed, and had tried to tame him till he became disgusted, and now he had brought the magnificent specimen of horseflesh out on the plains near the fort and offered him to the man who could succeed in riding him.

Those rough men were judges of horseflesh. There was not one among them who had not felt the need of a good steed on more than one occasion, and here was an animal, if once broken, that was not only the handsomest, but would probably prove to be the speediest and hardiest horse in the section of Fort Bridger.

No wonder, then, that Cheyenne Charlie's offer to give the stallion to the man who could tame him created so much excitement and drew so many men of the border there on this day.

All of them were types of vigorous manhood. Some were of the very reckless sort, daring to the last degree.

But Cheyenne Charlie acknowledged himself beaten when he gave up the attempt to break the sorrel, and what Cheyenne Charlie could not do with a wild horse was thought by all who knew him to be hardly worth trying.

At the point upon which our story opens two men, a tough old border scout and a half-breed, who were as reckless as they were wiry, had failed.

Both were thrown over the sorrel's head in spite of anything they could do before they had hardly got upon his bare back.

In the crowd were four mounted men with lariats.

They were there for the purpose of lassoing the stallion every time he got away from a would-be rider.

"What's ther matter with you fellers?" roared Cheyenne Charlie, who was certainly enjoying the performances of the men. "There ain't one of you what kin ride ther critter, an' you know it. He's a streak of greased lightnin', an' that's why I bought him so cheap. Hark ye, now, after all have tried him that wants to I'm going to turn him loose on ther prairie."

"There ain't much use in my tryin'," observed a rather short young fellow in a new suit of buckskin trimmed with bright green fringe, as he stepped forward, signifying that he was to be the next aspirant for the ownership of the stallion; "but I reckon I kin stand a fall about as easy as any of the rest of yer."

"Only listen to Jack Robedee!" exclaimed a man in the crowd. "Any one to hear him would think that he did have somewhat of an idea that he would ride ther animal."

"I ain't said so, have I?" was the retort from the third candidate; "but I'm goin' to try, though, for that horse are too nice a critter to be left runnin' wild."

"Say when you're ready, then," observed one of the two men who were holding the prancing steed by the head.

"I'm ready now; let him go!" and with remarkable quickness the young fellow seized the bridle rein and swung himself upon the horse's back.

As the men jumped back from the stallion's head he made a wild leap forward, and then began springing up and down as though his feet were attached to a set of powerful springs.

But the fellow called Jack Robedee stuck to his back and did his best to urge the animal forward.

If he could get the horse running straight ahead he might be able to tire him out, and thus subdue him.

But that is just what every one who had preceded him had thought. The sorrel stallion would not do this, however.

He was averse to having a man on his back, and felt it his duty to get him off every time one got there.

For about three seconds the stallion pranced about, and then dropping suddenly upon his forelegs he kicked up viciously from behind, and sent Robedee flying over his head a dozen feet away.

Once more the loud guffaws of the men rang out on the breeze, and picking himself up the third aspirant limped away, satisfied that no man on earth could ride the horse.

"I think if I had a saddle on him, an' I once got into it, I could ride him," remarked the smallest and lightest man

in the crowd, as he stepped to the fore, carrying a saddle. "If you fellers will help me put this saddle on I'll bet I'll stay on him five minutes, or else break my neck."

"Is that so, Wiry?" queried Cheyenne Charlie, as he looked at the man pityingly. "You have got a big opinion of yourself, an' I'm awful sorry for yer."

"All right; but jest wait. I'll show you fellers a trick that you've never seen," and watching his chance Wiry darted forward and flung the saddle over the horse's back.

The wild creature was now quivering with rage and excitement. He pranced a little, but the men were adepts at the game, and they held him down sufficient to allow the girths to be buckled and tightened.

Then by dint of much hopping about, the little man called Wiry got his left toe in the stirrup and shot upward into the saddle.

"Let him go!" he yelled. "I'll strike across ther prairie like a streak of greased lightnin'! I ain't no lame coyote, I want yer ter know!"

The men did let him go, and like a thunderbolt the sorrel started off. He ran for just about ten yards, and then wheeling suddenly to the left dropped to the ground and rolled over as though shot.

A scream of pain came from Wiry as the stallion sprang to his feet and made a break for the open prairie, only to be caught by a dexterous swing of a lariat and thrown.

Half a dozen men rushed to the side of the man and lifted him up.

His left arm hung limp at his side, and he was breathing heavily.

"Arm broke an' hurt inside," said Cheyenne Charlie. "Wiry's saddle didn't do him any good. Take him over to ther surgeon, boys, an' let 'em fix him up. He won't tackle another wild sorrel stallion in some time, I reckon."

Four of the men formed an improvised litter by locking hands, and the scout's orders were carried out to the very letter.

For the next ten minutes no one offered to tackle the horse, which was now standing pretty quiet, though chafing under the bit that his mouth was so unused to.

Then the ugliest looking man in the crowd—a Mexican half-breed Indian, commonly called a "greaser,"—stepped up.

This man, though on pretty fair terms with the inhabitants of the settlement which bore the same name as the fort, was not liked by the majority of the men.

Dark stories were related of him and his connection with a band of road agents that had been broken up a short time before by the soldiers and border men.

As he stepped forward, a candidate for the ownership of the horse, one of the men in the party whispered to Cheyenne Charlie that he "hoped ther greaser would break his neck."

"Maybe he will," was the laconic reply. "I reckon if I can't master that sorrel no greaser kin!"

The saddle was still upon the back of the stallion, though not exactly in its proper position. The greaser stepped up,

and after many attempts succeeded in getting it the way he wanted it.

Then he watched his chance and got the stirrup.

As he landed upon the animal's back a regular circus ensued.

Though the horse was not a broncho, he went through all the tactics of one, and being somewhat used to that sort of thing, the greaser laughed triumphantly.

He wore a pair of spurs, and he sank them deep into the creature's flanks in his efforts to get him to start to run.

But the sorrel would not run just then. He bucked and he jumped, and used every effort to dislodge the man from his back, but without avail.

But there are more ways than one of killing a cat, as the old saying goes, and though the horse did not want to kill a cat, it looked as though he did want to kill a greaser.

Suddenly, without the least warning, the animal gave a mighty spring straight ahead, and struck the ground with his fore feet with a shock that shook the ground.

At the same instant the shapely hind hoofs flew high in the air, and it seemed that the stallion was going to do the act of tumbler in the circus.

The greaser left the saddle like a shot from a gun and landed heavily on the back of his head.

He lay motionless as a log, and it was not until the horse had been caught that the men stepped forward to see if he was hurt.

"You've got your wish," said Cheyenne Charlie, solemnly, as he made a quick examination and turned to the man who had said he hoped the greaser would break his neck.

"Do you mean that?"

"Yes; his neck is broke, an' he must have died as soon as he struck. I guess I had better turn ther critter loose. 'Tain't likely that any one else will want to try him now."

"No, I guess not. I wouldn't have him nohow."

"Does any one else want a chance on ther sorrel?" called out Cheyenne Charlie.

Not a man answered.

"If you don't I'm going to let him go. He wasn't made for a man to ride, anyhow."

At this juncture a horseman was seen approaching in the distance, and for some reason, just why he did not know, the scout did not give the word to let the wild horse go.

He, like the rest, had riveted his eyes on the approaching stranger, for no one recognized him, and they all waited until a very lame old gray came to a halt in their midst, and a bright, handsome boy of eighteen, with a wealth of waving chestnut hair hanging down his back, dismounted.

"How are you, gentlemen? What is going on here?" asked the new arrival, in a clear, musical voice. "Some one hurt?"

"Well, yes," answered Cheyenne Charlie, "I reckon ther greaser is hurt somewhat, but I guess he don't feel it. Where did you come from, an' who might you be?"

"I just came through a regular hornet's nest of Sioux Indians," was the quick retort. "My horse was shot from under me, and I managed to catch this one and ride away.

The bullets flew thick around me, but I only got touched by one, I guess."

It was not necessary for the boy to state that he had been in a very hot encounter; his appearance told that. His tight-fitting suit of buckskin was smeared with fresh blood-stains, and the sleeve of his hunting coat was slashed into ribbons.

"Put her there, pard!" exclaimed Cheyenne Charlie, extending his hand. "I don't know yer, but I like yer."

"Thank you," replied the boy, as he shook the scout's hand warmly. "They call me Young Wild West, and that is the only name I have got that I know of."

Cheyenne Charlie gave a start.

"I've heard of you, Young Wild West," said he. "I want yer to believe me when I say I am proud to make your acquaintance."

It was quite evident that the majority of the men in the party had heard the name before, for they crowded around, all anxious to shake the boy's hand.

He had such an easy manner and prepossessing air that they took to him at once.

"So ther Sioux are up to their tantrums ag'in, hey?" observed Cheyenne Charlie, after a pause. "There must be something up, or they wouldn't show their hand so near ther fort. Was there many in ther gang that you had ther trouble with?"

"About forty. Old Gray Elk was leading them, himself. I have strong reasons to believe that they are on their way to raid the settlers down near the Forks. I rode hard to notify the soldiers at the fort."

With these words Young Wild West turned and walked toward an army officer who was strolling that way, having heard that a man had been killed through the attempted breaking of a wild horse.

The handsome young rider in the bloody suit of buckskin soon delivered his message, and then, as the officer hastened back to the fort, he came back and paused near the stallion, casting an admiring glance at the animal as he did so.

"Who owns the horse?" he asked.

"No one," retorted Cheyenne Charlie. "He ain't worth ownin' 'cause he is one of ther few of his kind that won't be rode. Turn ther sorrel satan loose, boys!"

"Hold on!"

The words left the lips of Young Wild West with a ring that fairly electrified the crowd.

"Wha-wha-what!" stammered Charlie.

"If no one owns him I'll take him. I'm in need of a horse if any one ever was."

"But you couldn't ride this one—none of us kin."

"Is he mine if I ride him?"

"Well—er—yes. But——"

"Never mind the buts. I will manage him, see if I don't."

The boy walked up to the stallion. The wild horse was now in a great pitch of nervous excitement—far more dangerous to tackle than he had been before, Cheyenne Charlie said—but Young Wild West did not appear to realize anything of the sort.

He patted the stately creature on the neck with one hand

and seized the bridle rein with the other. Then, before the spectators had scarcely realized it, he was in the saddle.

The horse tried the same old tricks, only more vicious than before, if possible, but the boy answered to his every move with a grace that was the acme of equestrianism.

The rough, honest men assembled there looked on with astonishment depicted on their faces.

It dawned upon them as if by magic that there was one, at least, who could master that stallion.

"Whoopee, boys!" yelled Cheyenne Charlie. "Did yer ever see anything like that?"

"Never!" came the unanimous response, and then they held their breath.

The sorrel had tried everything that he had been so successful in before, and the rider was still in the saddle.

When the animal attempted to roll with him, Young Wild West was on his feet upon the ground, and when he got up with a leap he was in the saddle again.

It was too much for the horse, and with a snort that was half fear, half defiance, he darted over the prairie with the speed of an arrow.

The astonished border men watched horse and rider until they were lost to view in a cloud of dust.

"Tain't likely they'll ever come back," said one, and then they started for the settlement, taking the body of the greaser and the crippled gray Young Wild West had ridden in with them.

But what was their astonishment when, twenty minutes later, the boy came galloping up the single street near the fort with waving hat and loosened rein.

"Whoa, Spitfire!" he exclaimed, and the sorrel stallion, now covered with foam, came to a halt, showing that he was under perfect control.

"Three cheers for Young Wild West, ther Prince of ther Saddle!" cried Cheyenne Charlie, jumping upon a barrel in front of the supply store.

CHAPTER II.

TRAILING THE SIOUX.

"How is that, gentlemen?" asked Young Wild West, when the cheering had ceased. "It isn't so hard to break a wild horse, after all, is it?"

"Not when you know how," replied Cheyenne Charlie. "By ginger, boys, ther critter seems to be as gentle as a lamb."

The daring boy rode the sorrel up and down the street a few times, making him face anything and everything, so as to thoroughly make him understand that there was nothing to be afraid of, and then dismounted.

The horse rubbed his nose against his conqueror's shoulder as Young Wild West held him close to the bit, thus showing a sign of affection that was remarkable for such a short acquaintance.

Again the men broke into a cheer.

The stallion looked more shapely and powerful than ever just then, but there was not one among them who envied the boy.

He had proved himself to be the only one who could tame the animal, and that was all there was to it.

It was quite likely that even now he would allow no one else to ride him.

A detachment of soldiers now came riding up. They halted near Young Wild West and the lieutenant in command asked him if he was going to ride over to the Forks with them.

"Certainly," was the reply. "I am glad you got ready so quick, though it is doubtful if the Sioux will make their attack before nightfall."

"I have orders to drive them back and kill every man of them if it comes to a fight."

"Well, the red demons are well armed," said Young Wild West, as he mounted the sorrel and rode off beside the lieutenant; "and the fact of old Gray Elk being in command of them is enough to warrant that they are on the warpath."

"And they were heading for the Forks, you say?"

"Yes."

"How did you run afoul of them?"

"I was chasing a small herd of buffaloes along the bank of a dry creek. All at once the animals scattered and dashed off to the right with the speed of the wind. I had a pretty good horse, but he was tired out and refused to turn as quickly as I wanted him to.

"Just then a whole nest of Indians arose from the bushes before me and began shooting at me.

"I returned the fire, using both my revolvers, and sank the spurs in to the rowels. The horse started then, and a running fight began.

"How it was I don't know, but I must have borne a charmed life, for the bullets flew around me as thick as hailstones.

"I was touched once, but it was only a graze. Suddenly my horse was hit in the flank and he dropped, throwing me over his head. I thought it was all up with me then, but I had two shots left, and I made up my mind to put them where they would do most good.

"The nearest Sioux to me was mounted on a gray horse, and he had expended all his shots. He rode straight for me with his tomahawk swinging, ready to cleave my skull.

"When he was near enough so I knew I couldn't miss I fired. He dropped, and I caught the horse before it had time to dash away over the plain.

"Though the steed was crippled and poor, it could put up a good gait for a short distance, and after they had chased me for a couple of miles they gave it up, evidently thinking that they were getting too near the fort for safety."

"A close call, young fellow. Where do you live?"

"At the Forks for the present. I never stop in one place any length of time. I have no relatives that I know of, and consequently no real home."

"And your name?"

"Young Wild West."

"Is that all?"

"Yes; that is all the name I ever knew."

"Why, how did you come by such a name? It is appropriate, though, I must say," and the lieutenant cast an admiring glance at the handsome, athletic young horseman beside him.

"All that I know about it is what I have been told. Some fifteen years ago a party of hunters found me on the plains of Southern Kansas. I was lying in a clump of bushes near the smoking ruins of a cabin. I was an infant three years of age, and it was my cries that attracted the attention of the hunters as they paused to survey the ruin and disaster a band of Comanches had brought about an hour or so before.

"One of the men took me in his arms and quieted me as best he could. He tried to make me tell my name, but I could not give them anything that sounded intelligible, so the man who had me in his arms named me Young Wild West, because it was in a very wild part of the West where I was found and I was so young.

"The hunters buried three bodies before they left the ruins. They were supposed to be those of my father and mother and a little sister who was older than I was. The scalps had been taken from all three.

"The hunter took me to his humble cabin and adopted me. His name was William West, so you see I not only bore the name that circumstances suggested me to be called, but his name as well."

"A remarkable story," said the lieutenant. "Is your adopted father still living?"

"No; he died five years ago. I have been hustling for myself ever since. I have managed to get quite a little schooling farther east, but I have never forgotten what my mission in life is."

"Your mission in life?"

"Yes. My mission in life is to do good to mankind in general, and to avenge the killing of my parents and my little sister."

"I congratulate you. You are a remarkable young fellow, Young Wild West. I hope you will succeed in all your undertakings."

"Thank you. What do you think of my new horse?"

The lieutenant took a look at the sorrel for the first time.

"What!" he gasped. "That is not the stallion the men were trying to break over there near the fort, is it?"

"The same."

"Why, he appears to be as tame as any horse now."

"So he is. I conquered him, and he realizes that I am his master. In two days' time I will have him so I can turn him loose and make him come at my call. I have had a great deal to do with horses in my day, especially wild ones."

They rode on in silence for a few minutes, and then the lieutenant said:

"Why don't you apply for a position as a scout in the Government service?"

"I don't care for the job. It would hold me too long in one locality. My home is anywhere from the headwaters of the Missouri River to the Mouth of the Rio Grande. I was born in the Wild West, and I always want to live in it."

"But it will not always be wild out here, perhaps."

"Oh, yes; it will always be wild to a certain extent—as long as you and I live, anyhow."

The detachment was riding at a spanking clip, and the place where Young Wild West had been surprised by the Sioux was soon reached.

They counted three dead Indians as they rode along, which showed that the boy was not only an excellent horseman, but a pretty fair shot, as well.

The trail of the Sioux was soon picked up. It led along the bank of the dry creek, through a long strip of timber, and thence through a growth of chapparal. It was not exactly in the direction of the Forks, but Young Wild West took note of the fact that it ran in a sort of semi-circle, gradually drawing in toward the Forks.

"We will find them in the timber belt half a mile south of the settlement," he said. "They are making this detour so they will not be apt to be seen. They want to make the attack a complete surprise, so they won't lose many men. Old Gray Elk is a very shrewd one."

"There will be no Gray Elk after we get through with him this day," replied the lieutenant, whose name was Johnson, "If they attack the settlers at the Forks that will seal his doom."

"And there will be a general uprising among the Sioux."

"A sure thing. There will be lots of work for us to do then. Times have been a little dull the last two months. Your message is the first that has been received at the fort to the effect that the Indians were not behaving themselves. The men are anxious for some sharp work, and by the looks of things just now they will be apt to get it."

The sun was about two hours high when the detachment of soldiers reached the chapparal. Young Wild West suggested that the lieutenant lead his men direct to the Forks, while he would follow the trail and see what the red men were up to.

Though he had only known the boy but a short time, Lieutenant Johnson placed the utmost confidence in him. He at once favored the suggestion, and after cautioning the brave young scout, he gave the necessary command and the blue uniformed riders turned on a straight course for the settlement.

Young Wild West patted his newly acquired steed on the neck and rode off over the trail at an easy canter.

"I have named you Spitfire," he said, "because you cut up and showed such an ugly temper when I first mounted you. I will keep on calling you that, even if you never cut up again."

The horse seemed to understand that he was being spoken to, for he pricked up his ears and uttered a low whinny.

The secret of the horse's sudden tameness was owing to the fact that the young scout had positively asserted that he was master, and then treated him gently, thus showing that no harm was to result from the captivity.

The reader knows only too well that the horse is a very intelligent animal. There are some who are far superior to others in this line, and there are exceptions where they have

been known to show almost as much intelligence as some men. The sorrel was one of the exceptions, it seemed.

It was yet more than an hour's ride to the Forks, so Young Wild West kept right on.

He was on the alert for the appearance of one of the Sioux scouts, who might have been kept back for the purpose of watching for signs of pursuit.

The boy was up to all the Indian tricks on the calendar, as young as he was.

About half an hour after he parted company with the detachment of soldiers his eagle eye suddenly beheld something moving a little over half a mile ahead of him.

He was riding through a clump of alders on the banks of a stream at the time, and was shielded from the gaze of any one who might be at any distance.

Young Wild West at once brought his horse to a halt.

"An Indian scout, as sure as fate!" he muttered. "Old Gray Elk is certainly bent on attacking the settlement or he would not send a scout back to watch for signs of pursuit. The redskin is coming this way, too. Well, let him. I only wish it was Gray Elk himself. I would take his scalp back to Fort Bridger with me or my name is not Young Wild West."

The boy walked his horse to a spot where he could part the tall alders and get a better view.

For the space of two full minutes he gazed directly ahead.

Then he nodded in a significant manner, and exclaimed:

"Two of them, eh? Well, I am not afraid of them. Let them come."

Sure enough, there was another Indian horseman to be seen. He was off to the right of the first, but both were heading toward the clump of alders, which was the only place of cover in that vicinity.

Many would have turned back and made a detour, so as to not come in contact with the Indians, but not so with Young Wild West. He was not built of that sort of material.

He had started to follow the trail for the purpose of learning what the Sioux were up to, and how could he learn any better than by meeting two of their number and holding a parley with them?

That was his idea. He would wait for them, appear before them suddenly, and ask them what Gray Elk meant by attacking him that afternoon.

If they acted stubborn and showed fight he would drop them, that was all.

Rather a big undertaking, some would say. One boy against two crafty Sioux Indians! It did not look as though he would stand much show.

But he had faced more than two and come out alive, and that was why he did not hesitate to pursue this course now.

The two Sioux did not appear to be in much of a hurry. Every now and then they would bring their steeds to a walk and scan the prairie on all sides.

"They are looking for me, no doubt," the daring young scout thought. "They know I would most likely ride straight to the fort and notify the soldiers, and that would probably mean that a detachment would be sent to hunt them up."

He examined his two big Colt revolvers, and saw that each chamber was properly loaded, and then proceeded to stroke and fondle his horse for about the fiftieth time since he had come in possession of him.

Nearer and nearer came the two savages.

They were now less than a quarter of a mile away.

They were riding side by side, conversing in their own guttural tongue.

As smiling as though he was going to give a pleasant surprise to some friend who was dear to him, Young Wild West sat there in the saddle.

The next minute the mustangs ridden by the two Sioux crashed into the alders.

"Halt!" cried Young Wild West, in a ringing tone.

CHAPTER III.

GRAY ELK IS DEFEATED.

The two Indians were thunderstruck when they beheld the young horseman calmly sitting there before them.

He had a revolver in either hand, but they were not leveled.

"Ugh!" they grunted in unison.

"Do you know me, redskins?" asked Young Wild West, raising his weapons a few inches.

Both had their hands on their tomahawks, and one had an army rifle in his left hand that would only require a quick move to send a bullet in the boy's body.

But they did not offer to make a move, knowing well if they did those deadly revolvers which menaced them would begin to spit fire.

"Me know paleface," answered one of them. "He heap big brave; shoot straight; he shoot good Injuns to-day; Injuns no harm him."

The boy laughed lightly at this.

"I know you didn't harm me," he said; "but it wasn't your fault that you didn't. So I shot good Indians, did I? Well, if that is true I am sorry for it. But I don't believe it is true."

"Me no lie to paleface; paleface heap big brave; paleface shoot straight."

"Yes, I know that. Now, then, where is Gray Elk and the rest of your gang?"

"Gray Elk go home to his wigwam; no fight palefaces; like palefaces heap much."

"Is that the way to your village?" and Young Wild West cast a quick glance over the trail that curved toward the settlement.

"Fine buffalo there; shoot first, then go home to wigwam."

"Well, if all this is true what are you two redskins going this way for?"

"We go right back to Gray Elk now; we no see buffalo."

The spokesman of the two was lying faster than a horse could trot, and no one knew it any better than the one he was lying to.

The boy also knew that the two Sioux were itching to kill him, and that it was the fear of being shot themselves that kept them from attacking him.

After questioning them a little further without getting any more satisfaction, Young Wild West exclaimed:

"Turn around and go back to the treacherous old chief, Gray Elk. Tell him to go back to his village and let the white people alone. If he don't he will lose his scalp and his wigwam will be burned by the soldiers from the fort. Now, go."

They made a move to obey, and as they did so the one who had the rifle raised it as quick as a flash and pulled the trigger.

It was a very clever move, and came near being successful. As it was, the bullet whistled dangerously close to the daring boy's ears.

But that was the Sioux warrior's last shot.

Crack! Crack! Both of Young Wild West's revolvers spoke, and he reeled and fell from the saddle.

The other was already galloping from the spot, and the boy called out to him:

"Tell Gray Elk just what I said!"

The Sioux made no reply. He was bent on getting out of range of those deadly revolvers, and he urged his horse forward at the top of its speed.

Young Wild West waited till he got about three hundred yards start, and then he started to follow, keeping at about the same distance behind.

The sorrel stallion had been frightened considerably at the discharge of the revolvers, but his master had no difficulty in calming him.

"Now, Spitfire, we will keep right at this pace till we get ready to turn off, or something happens," he said to the animal.

Just how fast Spitfire could run he did not know. He had not had an opportunity to test his powers yet, but he was confident that he would be able to hold his own with the best of them.

And before many hours he was to have an opportunity to see what the handsome beast was made of, though he did not dream of it just then.

The dashing young horseman rode on, his body moving with that of the animal he bestrode.

Graceful riding is a thing that has been accomplished by many after constant practice, but to Young Wild West it came natural. It was something he never remembered of having had to learn.

The sun was just sinking behind the horizon like a great ball of fire when the little group of log cabins that made up the settlement at the Forks came in view.

The cluster of primitive looking habitations lay off to the left, while the strip of timber the boy had spoken of while conversing with Lieutenant Johnson was almost directly ahead, about a mile distant.

Young Wild West brought his horse to a halt.

He had slackened his pace somewhat during the past two minutes, and the Indian was now pretty close to the timber.

Waiting until he had reached the cover of the trees, the boy rode off at a gallop straight for the settlement.

He knew the soldiers must certainly be there by this time, and he breathed a sigh of relief.

But it was a pretty sure thing that old Gray Elk, or some of his band had seen them come, and in that case they would not be apt to attack the settlers.

There were women and children there, and for the time being they were safe, at any rate.

Young Wild West rode into the settlement at an easy canter.

The population of the place did not exceed forty, including men, women and children, and most of them appeared when the boy on the sorrel stallion came to a halt.

"Hello, Wild!" exclaimed a young fellow of about his own age, who had clear blue eyes and curly hair. "So you have got a new horse, have you? I am sorry that you did not let me go with you to-day."

"It is a good thing you didn't go with me, I guess, Jim," was the reply. "I have had a pretty exciting time of it. Where are the soldiers from Fort Bridger?"

"Soldiers? Why, we haven't seen any. What do you mean?"

"Oh, they haven't got here yet, then. They are probably lying close by, so they will not be seen by the Sioux."

"What are you talkin' about, young feller?" demanded the oldest man of the bunch, whose name was Sam Murdock. He was the recognized leader of the settlers and an experienced woodman and Indian fighter.

"Well, to get right down to the point, there is a band of Sioux, with old Gray Elk himself at their head, over there in the woods. They are going to attack this place to-night."

"What!"

"It is true. They are on the warpath again, so we may as well get ready for them."

"You said the soldiers were close by, didn't you?" spoke up Jim Dart.

"Yes, they must be. They came right for here, while I followed the trail of the Sioux."

"Oh, if they are anywhere, then, they must be over there at the north end of the timber strip. If they had rode right here in the open daylight the Indians would certainly have seen them. That would have spoiled their intentions."

"Well, we must be ready for 'em, in case ther sogers didn't git here," observed old Sam Murdock, as he examined his trusty rifle, which he had grabbed when the startling news was first broken to him.

Young Wild West had not been at the Forks two weeks, but in that short space of time the men had learned to place the greatest of confidence in him.

If he ever gave any advice it was sure to be taken. By the older element he was regarded as a marvel, and by the younger he was looked upon as a great hero.

Jim Dart had fallen in love with the young scout at the very start. Jim was a very brave young fellow himself, and he could shoot and ride as good as the average plainsman.

But he saw in Young Wild West lots that he would like

to emulate, and hence his ambition to become a close friend of his.

Young Wild West did not dismount just then, but turning to Jim he, much to the boy's joy, said:

"Get your horse, and we will take a scout around. I want to see where the soldiers are, and also find the exact spot the Sioux will come if they do attack us."

"All right," was the reply, and five minutes later Dart was mounted on a fine big iron-gray horse and at our hero's side.

"Get all the women and children in the center," said Young Wild West. "It may be that the soldiers are not very close, and in that case there has got to be some sharp fighting done."

"I'll attend to it," answered Sam Murdock.

The two boys now rode off straight for about two hundred yards, and then made a circle about the cluster of cabins.

It was now thoroughly dark, and the stars gave them all the light they had.

When the complete circuit had been made Young Wild West led the way for the north end of the timber strip.

Jim Dart followed him closely, on the alert for the least sound that was out of the ordinary.

It was a good mile away where they were heading for, but their horses were put on a swift canter, and they rapidly neared the end of the woods.

The strip of woods ran in a semi-circle, and this end of it was almost directly opposite to where the Indians were supposed to be in hiding.

The two young riders slackened speed as they neared the timber, and just as they did so they saw the figure of a man.

"Halt!" came the command, and then they knew that the soldiers were there.

"Who goes there?" the sentinel quickly added.

"A friend!"

"Advance, friend, and give the countersign."

"I haven't it to give you. I am Young Wild West, who rode to the fort this afternoon and notified the commandant that the Sioux were on the warpath. Please tell Lieutenant Johnson that I am here."

The two horses were at a standstill now, and still facing them with leveled gun the soldier called to another, who was not far in the rear of him.

"Tell the lieutenant that Young Wild West is here," he said.

There was no delay, and the lieutenant was soon on the spot.

He was glad to see the young scout safe and sound.

"Did you follow the redskins?" he asked.

"Yes. I had to shoot one of them, too."

"Yes?"

"Old Gray Elk sent two scouts back to be on the watch for a pursuit. I held them up and questioned them, but could gain no information worth mentioning. They declared that they were good Indians, as they usually do when you corner them. I am quite sure that they are over at the other end of the woods, for I saw the fellow I let go follow the trail till he disappeared among the trees."

"You are a cool one," observed Johnson.

"Dealing with Sioux Indians is dangerous work, and you have got to be on the watch for treachery all the time, you know."

"That is true. What puzzles me is how you came to escape being injured after coming in contact with two of Gray Elk's scouts."

"Oh, that was easy enough. One of them tried to shoot me, and just missed by about an inch. He is the one I was compelled to send to the happy hunting grounds of the red man. I could have dropped the other fellow with no trouble whatever, but he did not show fight, and I would not be guilty of shooting any man, white, black or red, unless I was compelled to."

"That's a grand principle, ain't it?" interposed Jim Dart, looking at his friend admiringly. "I haven't known Wild very long, lieutenant, but I'll stake my life that he is the whitest boy in the whole West."

"There is not the shadow of a doubt but that you are right," was the reply.

While they stood there talking the distant sound of fire-arms suddenly came to their ears.

"The Indians are attacking the settlement!" exclaimed Young Wild West, wheeling his horse around. "Come! we must go to the rescue. They won't be able to hold them off very long; there are too many of the red demons for that, and old Gray Elk is a regular dare-devil!"

Like a shot the handsome sorrel dashed over the plain, and after him went Jim Dart.

Thirty seconds later they heard the sound of the bugle, and they knew that the troopers were coming right after them.

Young Wild West let Spitfire go at his full speed now, and his companion was rapidly left behind.

He was surprised at the wonderful gait of the horse. Never had he covered the ground so fast before.

"On, my sorrel beauty!" he exclaimed. "I begin to believe that you are worth your weight in gold."

The firing was now fast and furious, showing that there was hot work going on.

Young Wild West was less than three hundred yards from the scene of the conflict now, and Jim Dart was nearly half that distance behind him.

With the ringing whoop on his lips that the border men are so used to giving, Young Wild West dashed into the thickest of the fray, discharging his revolvers right and left.

The fierce yells of the Indians and the smoke and flame of battle made it seem as though pandemonium had broken loose, but the daring boy on the sorrel horse did not seem to mind it.

He seemed to be right in his element, and back and forth he galloped, laying more than one red man low from his unerring aim.

Jim Dart followed the same tactics the instant he arrived.

For the space of a minute the advance of Gray Elk was checked.

The shrewd old chief had not counted on such a resist-

ance, and when he found that he was losing his braves so fast he changed his plan of action.

He drew back and began sending blazing arrows at the roofs of the cabins.

He knew that this would disconcert the settlers for the time being, and he would make one great rush and make the massacre complete.

The little band of whites were fighting for all they held dear, and when they saw their homes were in danger of being burned to the ground they became desperate.

"Steady, men!" cried Young Wild West. "The soldiers are coming!"

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when a rattling discharge of musketry rang out.

Lieutenant Johnson had arrived with his detachment.

But some of the Indians, more daring than the others, were right in the midst of the whites. They were bent upon something more than slaughter, it seemed, though no one knew what they were up to just then.

But they scattered like so many frightened sheep the moment the troopers reached the scene, and those who did make targets of themselves galloped from the spot.

Just as victory had been assured for the whites the shrill scream of a female rang out from the darkness beyond.

At that very instant old Sam Murdock dashed up to Young Wild West.

"Great Scott, lad!" he cried, in an agonized voice, "ther red devils have carried off my daughter Arietta!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE TRAIL IS LOST.

Young Wild West was bleeding from a slight wound on the lobe of his right ear.

A bullet from a rifle in the hands of one of the Indians had just grazed him, and it was stinging as though a thousand needles were running into his flesh.

He had become acquainted with Sam Murdock's granddaughter shortly after his arrival at the Forks. She was a beautiful girl of sixteen, light hearted and as graceful as a fairy, and a born equestrienne.

Both her parents were dead—slain by Indians several years before—and she lived with her grandfather.

Wild, as his intimate acquaintances called him for short, had taken a strong liking to the girl, but now when he heard that she had been carried away by Gray Elk's band, it seemed that he more than liked her.

Quickly tying up his wounded ear with his handkerchief, he urged Spitfire forward, and rode away on the trail of the retreating Sioux.

"Stop him!" thundered Lieutenant Johnson. "The boy is riding to his doom."

But it was too late now. His daring scout was gone.

Jim Dart was not there when all this happened, and it was not until Young Wild West had been gone nearly five minutes that he learned of it.

"I will try my best to overtake him and help him rescue the girl," he said; "but I'm afraid I can't catch him. That horse of his runs like a streak of lightning."

Just then two newcomers reached the scene.

They were Cheyenne Charlie and Jack Robedee, scouts from Fort Bridger.

"We got here a little too late," observed the former.

"No, you are just in time!" cried Jim. "Gray Elk's braves have carried off pretty Arietta Murdock, and Wild has gone in pursuit all alone. Come! We will go and help him."

"Do you mean Young Wild West?" asked Cheyenne Charlie, as he tightened his grip on the bridle rein of his steed.

"Yes; will you go with me?"

"Will we go with yer? I reckon we will, won't we, Jack?"

"As sure as guns, we will!" was the quick retort.

The next moment the three were hot on the trail Young Wild West had taken in his pursuit of the Sioux.

The three who were trying to overtake the brave boy were as daring and courageous as any of their class on the plains of the great West.

Fear was a thing they did not know.

The Indians must have had good horses, for at the end of fifteen minutes they had not gained a particle on them.

Where Young Wild West was just then they could not tell, but it seemed to them that with the splendid specimen of horseflesh he had under him he must certainly have come up with them by this time.

But they heard no shots fired, and that made it look as though he had not yet come in contact with the redskins.

The sky had been darkening rapidly in the last few minutes and the stars no longer were shining.

Soon drops of rain began to fall.

"Confound the luck!" exclaimed Jack Robedee. "This is all in favor of the pesky varmints. It was a great move of old Gray Elk's to get that gal in his clutches. It will be a miracle if she ever gets away alive."

"That's about right," Cheyenne Charlie retorted.

"She has got a good one trying to save her," ventured Jim Dart. "From what I have seen, I should judge that Young Wild West and Arietta Murdock think a good deal of one another. If Wild does get her away from the Indians I'd be willing to bet that they will be genuine lovers. She never gave me the smiles that I have seen her give him since he has been at the Forks. Arietta never paid any attention to the glances of any other young fellow, and I have noticed that he always turns red when he is talking to her."

"That's a good sign, an' no mistake," and Cheyenne Charlie turned up the collar of his coat to throw off the drops of rain, which were now falling pretty fast.

"A gal in ther case are never no good," observed Jack Robedee, who was a genuine woman-hater. "If Young Wild West goes under to-night, it will be all on account of a gal. It will be because he will forgit all about the tricks of his trade in his effort to get her away from Gray Elk,

an' he'll git riddled with bullets an' arrers before he knows it."

No one made any response to this. Jack was bound to have his own way about it, anyhow, and no one knew this better than Cheyenne Charlie.

But neither he nor Jim Dart had any idea that Young Wild West would go under that night. They knew just enough of him to believe that he was altogether too sharp to be caught napping.

Meanwhile the rain steadily increased. It looked as though a regular storm had set in.

As it was in the month of April, it was a cold rain, and therefore was anything but a pleasant night to be out on the plains.

There had been hardly a breath of wind before the rain set in, but now it began to blow a pretty stiff breeze from the northeast.

"We are in for it," said Cheyenne Charlie. "'Tain't likely ther reds will stop till they git to their village, without they do go into camp over in Buzzard's Canyon."

Buzzard's Canyon was about ten miles almost due south.

It was among the foothills of the range of mountains, and a very wild place it was.

"That is ther way ther trail is p'intin'," reported Jack. "I'll bet that's where we will find 'em, if we don't overtake 'em before."

"The village of old Gray Elk lies a little to the east of the canyon and about eight miles farther south, don't it?" asked Jim.

"Yes," was the reply. "That's jest it; but if it keeps on rainin' like this I don't think they'll try to make it afore daylight. There be plenty of good places to find shelter in through ther canyon, an' an Injun don't like to travel in a nor'easter any more than any one else does."

"There are plenty of big rocks and bowlders there that they could hide behind and pick off a regiment, if they wanted to, I guess."

"Yes," answered Charlie. "If they have any idea that ther soldiers are follerin' 'em they'll stop there, anyhow."

After this a silence of perhaps five minutes passed.

Not a sound could be heard but the hoof-beats of their steeds and the howling of the wind as it raged across the level stretch. Following a trail in the dark was not a very easy thing, but the horses were trained to it, and knew as much in that line as did their riders.

But at intervals of every few minutes the trio would come to a halt and make an examination of the ground.

When half an hour had passed it became necessary for them to dismount and feel with their hands for the hoof-prints, as the rain was gradually obliterating the trail.

It was about midnight when the ground ceased to be level. They were at the foothills of the range, and the canyon was not far distant.

But they were traveling by mere guesswork now, for the rain was falling in torrents, and in many places the water lay on the ground to a depth of several inches.

Some time before they had decided that there was only one thing left for them to do.

That was to find a suitable place and go into camp until daylight came.

It was just possible that they were traveling far out of their way, as they might have crossed the Indians' trail.

A few minutes later they found themselves among a lot of broken rocks. The ground was very hilly and uneven.

Cheyenne Charlie dismounted.

"There's no use goin' any further," he said. "We may be only losin' a whole lot of time by it."

"That's so," nodded Jack, as he shook the water from his head after the manner of a Newfoundland dog.

Charlie felt about in the dark, and presently found a huge bowlder which cut off the storm so that the rain could scarcely be felt.

"We'll stop right here," he said.

His two companions led their horses to the spot, and then Jim dropped upon his knee close to the bowlder and struck a match.

Much to his surprise and satisfaction, a shallow opening was right before him.

True, it did not extend over six or seven feet into the rock, but it was enough to entirely shield them from the storm.

A fallen pine tree lay almost across the opening, and some of the boughs projected right into the cave.

They were as dry as tinder, too, and this was more encouragement for the trio.

They now began to make a quick but thorough examination of the immediate neighborhood of the cave, and ten minutes later the horses were tied to the butt of the fallen tree, where an abundance of mountain grass grew, and where they were shielded from the storm.

A couple of rocks were rolled up against the tree right in front of the opening, and then a fire was started, so they might dry their wet clothing.

As soon as the fire got to burning Cheyenne Charlie made a circuit of the place to see if the blaze was sufficiently hidden from sight, and came back with a report that was satisfactory.

"Ther fire can't be seen fifty feet away. I reckon we are all right till morning," he said.

"If ther redskins ain't in camp somewhere sou'west of us, an git a whiff of ther smoke, we are sartinly all right," observed Robedee.

It was warm and comfortable in the shallow place, and removing their garments one at a time, they were soon drying them over the fire.

In less than two hours they had them dry. Then Jim and Robedee dropped off to sleep, while Charlie remained awake to guard the camp.

The storm did not desist, and after a while the lone watcher found himself growing so drowsy that he could not keep his eyes open.

He got up and went out to take a look at the horses.

"Whew!" he exclaimed under his breath. "This is a nasty night, and no mistake. I wonder where Young Wild West is now? He is the most likely young fellow I have ever seen, and it will be too bad if he loses his caution

'cause he's in love with ther girl, an' gets caught by ther Sioux. They'd burn him at ther stake in no time!"

The scout found the horses all right, and then he concluded to indulge in a little smoke to keep him awake.

He took pains to walk around till he came to a point where it would be impossible for the smoke to be wafted in the direction of the Indian camp.

Tobacco smoke will travel a long distance, and should it be smelled by so much as one of the Indians the place where it came from would be located by the reds in short order.

Cheyenne Charlie ran across a big tree that was hollow just to the left of the camp, and crouching into it, he produced his pipe and tobacco and got ready for a smoke.

He had matches that were dry, and so had no difficulty in lighting the pipe, and was soon puffing away contentedly.

From his position he could see the sleeping forms of Jim Dart and Jack Robedee in the shallow cave.

The fire was burning with a sort of smoulder, and it was a pretty sure thing that it could not be seen from the direction the Sioux had gone.

The sharp eyes and practised ears of the scout were on the alert for danger every instant.

When Cheyenne Charlie stood guard he did it in the right way.

His eventful life on the border had taught him a great many things, and he had learned that it was the proper thing for one to always be on the lookout for danger, whether there were signs of it or not.

Nothing could be heard but the pattering of the falling rain and the sighing of the wind as it moved the boughs of the trees overhead.

The scout had probably been crouched in the hollow tree for ten minutes when suddenly he heard a scratching noise right above him.

He listened and the sound was repeated.

Then some dirt and rotten pieces of wood came down on his head.

There was something alive in the tree.

That was certain, for such a scratching noise could not be made by the wind.

Cheyenne Charlie made a quick move to get out of the hollow tree, and as he did so his belt got caught upon a projecting knot.

It pulled him back further than he had been at first, and wedged him in.

"Whew!" he muttered as a cloud of dirt came down upon him.

"A bear, as sure as guns!"

He heard an ominous growl, and that told him that he had disturbed bruin, which had no doubt been taking a nap above him.

And now the creature was coming down to see who it was that had dared to bother him.

The scout knew that he must get out of the hollow tree without any loss of time.

Grasping the edges of the opening in the tree he pulled himself forward.

He cleared his body of the wedge-like position it had

been placed in, but before he could regain his equilibrium the rotten wood at the edges of the opening gave way and his fingers lost their hold.

Back into the interior of the tree he went, and at that very moment down came a heavy body upon him.

Bruin had found the intruder, and now there was going to be trouble.

Notwithstanding his bad luck in his efforts to get out of the hollow tree, Cheyenne Charlie did not get excited and lose his presence of mind.

As soon as he felt the warm, hairy body strike him his hand was upon the hilt of his knife.

The bear had come down the inside of the tree back to him, and was now between him and the opening.

The imperilled scout could have placed the muzzle of his revolver against the creature's left side and sent a bullet through its heart.

But such a thing would not do, as in all probability the Indians would hear the report.

Then it would be all up with the three trailers.

And Young Wild West and pretty Arietta Murdock's chances of rescue would be spoiled.

Charlie knew that what he did must be done quickly, for already the bear was turning around.

He could feel the hot breath of the beast in his face, now, and clutching the hilt of his knife firmly, he drew it back to make a plunge.

But just then the bear forced him back close to the interior of the tree, and he could not force the knife any further than just through the thick hide.

A fierce growl came from the beast, and with a quick move it turned around and got one of its paws about the neck of the unlucky scout.

Charlie was now moved to desperation.

He knew that much depended upon his strength now.

The bear must be forced back sufficiently far for him to get a good thrust at its heart.

With a mighty effort he hurled the beast toward the opening.

The bear must have been half way out of the hole, anyway, for much to the scout's joy and relief, it went out, dragging him with it.

Down upon the ground went both, the bear managing to land on top.

Bruin is a natural-born wrestler, it seems.

The bear had thrown its opponent, but its victory was but short lived, after all, for Cheyenne Charlie had his right arm free now.

One quick plunge and the sharp pointed blade found the animal's heart.

There was a brief struggle, during which the scout received two or three scratches, and then the bear gave up the ghost.

Cheyenne Charlie got upon his feet and shook himself after the manner of a dog just coming out of the water.

He was just about to hurry over to the cave where his companions slept on, unconscious of the thrilling time he

had just experienced, when a crackling sound suddenly came to his ears.

It came from the hollow tree, and turning quickly, the scout saw that the interior of it was on fire.

Then he thought of his pipe which had been knocked from his mouth when the bear fell from above.

The rotten wood on the inside of the tree was as dry as punk, and the coals from the pipe had ignited it.

"Great Scott!" ejaculated the scout. "That will never do. In a minute or two the whole inside of the tree will be on fire, and there will be more smoke than you kin shake a stick at. I've got to put that out, and mighty quick, at that."

Without any further delay he sprang to the tree.

There was only one way to make a quick job of it, and that was to stop up the hole at the top, so there would be no draught.

The rain was still falling heavily, but there was not enough water that dropped into the opening above to have any effect on the fire.

To think was to act with the scout, and the next moment he was ascending the tree.

Fortunately the limbs were not far from the ground, and he was soon going up like a monkey.

The opening was about fifteen feet from the ground, and he reached it in a jiffy.

The smoke was pouring from it in a dense cloud, and it behooved him to act quickly.

Should the wind veer around a little it would sweep toward the camp of the Sioux, and then the jig would be up.

Only a portion of the tree was dead, and Charlie began pulling off small branches that were just budding into leaves and thrusting them down into the hole.

Soaked with the rain, they would soon put out the fire.

He worked like a beaver, and at the end of ten minutes he had put it out.

Then he descended the tree.

As he dropped to the ground a low growl came to his ears, and before he could turn to locate the sound a heavy body was launched upon him, bearing him to the earth.

The female bear had come in search of its mate, only to find it dead.

And Cheyenne Charlie had descended the tree just in time to meet the savage beast, now rendered doubly fierce by the death of its mate.

Then a desperate struggle ensued, for the female bear had succeeded in pinioning the man's arms to his sides as it hugged him in its powerful grip.

Charlie fought desperately to free himself.

Over and over he rolled in his efforts to get his right hand free, so he could plunge his knife into the brute's heart.

He did not want to call on his friends for help, as he knew not how close the camp of the Indians might be.

Just as he felt that he must run the risk and do so he got his trusty right arm free.

Then he plunged his knife into the bear's side twice in succession.

The animal had been hugging him tightly from the start,

but now it almost crushed in his ribs, taking his breath away.

But only for a moment.

The keen-edged blade had found a vital part, and the powerful paws relaxed their hold upon him.

The scout struggled away from the beast just as it dropped to the ground, dead.

Completely exhausted he sank to the ground close to it.

"Whew!" he gasped. "I wonder if there are any more about? Two cinnamon bears in one night is quite enough for me! An' to be taken by surprise both times, too. Well, they didn't hurt me of any account, so I'll go back to ther fire an' dry myself once more."

Leaving the two bears where they had fallen he hastened to the shallow cave where Jim Dart and Jack Robedee were still sleeping.

Charlie placed a couple of sticks of wood on the fire, so it would burn up a bit and give him a chance to dry his clothing.

Then before crawling in he took a look at the horses.

They had become tired of nibbling the grass and had lain down to rest.

"You are all right," muttered Charlie. "Blest if I don't think I'll take a nap, too. I don't think there is a redskin within five miles of here."

Walking back to the fire, he threw himself on the ground beside his sleeping companions.

In less than five minutes he was sleeping as soundly as they.

It was broad daylight when the scout awoke from his slumber. The storm had ceased and the sun was shining brightly.

The raindrops on the mountain foliage glistened like so many diamonds, and the perfume from the wild flowers that grew on the ridge a few yards above him made him enjoy the first real spring morning of the season.

The fire had long since died out, and Jack and Jim were still sound asleep, the latter snoring away as though his very life depended upon it.

Cheyenne Charlie stepped upon the trunk of the fallen tree, and proceeded to take a survey of his surroundings.

He had not been there a minute before he began to sniff the atmosphere suspiciously.

"I smell smoke," he muttered. "I'll be blest if I don't believe ther camp of ther redskins is close by. Yes, it's smoke, an' nothin' else. I guess I'll wake ther boys up."

A couple of shakes sufficed to arouse them, and they were soon acquainted with his discovery.

"It's smoke, as sure as guns," assented Jack; "an' by ther smell of it I don't believe it is very far away."

"That's right," said Jim Dart. "One of us had better crawl around a bit and see if we can't locate ther camp."

"I'll do that," retorted Charlie. "You fellers wait here, an have ther horses all ready, in case I git into trouble and have to light out putty quick. I'll do my puttiest to not let 'em scent me out."

Without another word he started off through the bushes in the direction the smell of smoke came from.

His companions saddled and bridled the horses, and then rather uneasily waited for his return.

Ten minutes passed.

They were just becoming very anxious when suddenly the scout came in sight.

"Did yer locate 'em?" asked Jack.

"I guess I did," was the reply. "They are right down here a bit, an' have got Young Wild West a prisoner along with ther gal."

CHAPTER V.

THE SIOUX SURPRISED.

With the handsome sorrel running like the wind, Young Wild West gained rapidly on the Indians.

He had no intention of getting into an open fight with them. He felt that if he would rescue the girl he must do it by strategy.

So he concluded to shoot off to the right and ride till he had headed the redskins off.

Then he might be able to do something.

The noise made by the hoofs of the Indians' mustangs drowned that made by the sorrel, and as it was pretty dark, the boy was not seen as he got abreast of the band an eighth of a mile distant.

"I'll keep on till I get a mile or so ahead of them, and then I'll stop and think of some plan by which I may be able to rescue Arietta," he thought, and he allowed the sorrel the full rein.

In a few minutes he was directly in advance of the Sioux, though they were not aware of it.

When the rain set in Wild had not left them out of hearing yet. They had pretty swift horses, and they were evidently making them do their best to reach shelter in a hurry.

The young scout's horse had been put through a pretty good course of sprouts that day, and he was now getting tired.

After a tight run of half an hour Young Wild West came to a halt, and dismounting, gave Spitfire a short rest.

He would have stopped longer, but he heard the Indians coming, and wishing to keep ahead of them, he went on.

Just what course of action to pursue he did not know.

After thinking hard for a few minutes, he came to the conclusion that the only way to do it would be to take the redmen by surprise and make them think that he had a crowd of men at his back.

He would empty both his revolvers in their midst as he made a dash and then seize the girl and ride away.

It was a very daring and risky thing to do, but Young Wild West did not mind that.

Plans of action are not always carried out.

And this was one of those cases.

About half a mile further on, while riding at a brisk canter, the limb of a tree struck the boy in the chest, and, quick as a flash, he was whisked from the back of his horse!

He landed heavily upon the ground, the back of his head striking a stone with such force as to render him unconscious.

When he came, to a few minutes later he found himself bound, hand and foot, and in the act of being lifted to the back of an Indian pony!

Used to all sorts of surprises as he was, this completely staggered Young Wild West.

While he lay on the ground in the falling rain, unconscious of what was taking place the band of Sioux had come upon him.

And to say that the red demons were elated when they saw who it was they had so unexpectedly found would be putting it altogether too mildly.

They could not quite understand how it was that he had managed to get ahead of them, for the last they saw of the intrepid young scout he was dealing out death in their midst with his never-failing revolvers.

But an Indian does not stop to ponder over anything much.

Here was the young paleface, who, notwithstanding their short acquaintance with him, they considered their worst foe.

And they had found him lying unconscious on the ground, horseless and alone, when they thought he was well in their rear, or at the settlement at the Forks.

"Ugh!" exclaimed Gray Elk in his guttural voice. "Paleface boy heap much brave; he lay down in the rain and go to sleep right in path of red man. Take paleface to home of Gray Elk, and he make fun for the squaws and papposes before he goes to the Happy Hunting Grounds of the white man."

This was the remark that Wild heard when he first returned to his senses.

It all came to him like a flash now, and he was himself almost instantly.

But he was utterly helpless, and, in spite of his struggles, his ankles were tied securely by a rope which was passed under the belly of the pony.

Just then he thought of his horse, Spitfire.

He ceased his struggles and looked anxiously around him.

A solitary torch in the hands of one of the red warriors was the only light, and that flickered as though it would go out at any moment as the falling rain-drops came in contact with the flame.

Within the radius of light cast by the torch his horse was nowhere to be seen.

"They have not got him," he thought. "It is not likely that he would allow himself to be caught by them, anyhow. I am glad he got away, and I hope if I ever get out of this scrape that I will be able to find him again. Poor Spitfire! He served me well as long as I remained on his back."

Young Wild West was thinking more about the loss of the sorrel stallion just then than he was about the precarious position in which he himself was placed.

It was not the first time he had been captured by the Indians, and probably that was why he was less concerned.

The truth of the matter was that he had not the least doubt but that he would get out of the scrape all right.

The chief had told him that he was to be taken to the Indian village, and that meant that he was not to be killed for several hours yet.

And in that several hours he must escape, so that the killing should be postponed indefinitely.

He had a stout heart, and a stout heart meant confidence. Confidence is half the battle in nine cases out of ten.

The old chief himself rode on the right of the prisoner, while on his left was a brave, who held the end of a buckskin thong, which was wound about Wild's waist in a secure manner.

There was no chance of the boy's escape, even if his hands and feet had been free.

As the mustangs galloped along he looked around to see if he could catch a glimpse of the girl he had started out to save.

But she was either ahead or behind, and he could not see her.

Wild had lost his hat, and with bare head, his long chestnut locks flowing in the drizzling rain, he rode on.

After what seemed to be many hours the Indians came to a halt.

He had never been in that section before, but he could easily tell that they were somewhere near a range of mountains.

The hilly aspect of the country told him that.

It was a very wild region, too. Rocks reared themselves on every hand and mountain pines grew here and there.

Half a dozen of the Indians began searching about for a convenient place to pitch their camp.

In a few minutes the best to be obtained was found, and they began to make themselves as comfortable as possible.

The camp was made under the lee of a craggy cliff which projected out several feet, thus shutting off the worst of the storm.

But Young Wild West was not placed under shelter or anything like it.

When he was taken from the back of the mustang he was securely lashed to the trunk of a blasted pine, right out where he had to suffer the full fury of the storm.

After many attempts a fire was kindled. The Sioux warriors piled the wood on as the flames increased, and soon it was a big fire.

The blankets and trappings were dried by this, and when this was done old Gray Elk had a tent made from a blanket, and rolling himself in another that was dry, he dropped off into slumber.

Nearly half of the band remained awake the entire night.

As for Young Wild West, there was no danger of his falling asleep. His position would not permit him, even if he had felt that way inclined.

He had not been tied to the tree very long when he caught sight of Arietta.

A couple of Indians were fixing a place for her in a niche in the rocky wall.

The chief must have given orders that she should be treated right, as they seemed to be very painstaking.

The girl saw the brave young scout at about the same time his gaze fell upon her.

She was pale from fear and her eyes were red from weeping, but she at once brightened up.

The presence of Young Wild West seemed to make her feel better.

They just had time to exchange glances, and then she was forced into the niche.

After a while a couple of dry blankets were tossed in to her, and then a guard consisting of four braves took position in front of her quarters.

The girl's hands were not tied, but it was impossible for her to think of making her escape.

The pelting rain was considerable torture to Young Wild West, but it soothed his aching head somewhat.

Wearily the long night passed.

The Sioux did not bother him in the least. They merely kept a watch.

As daylight came the storm cleared as suddenly as it came and the wind veered around in a direction almost opposite.

Pretty soon the sun came out, and with it Gray Elk arose.

More fuel was thrown on the fire and the redskins began to prepare their breakfast.

They had slain two buffaloes the day before, and they had brought the meat with them.

The fire was not a great distance from the boy, who was tied to the tree, and between it and the sunshine his clothing began to dry.

While the breakfast was being cooked Gray Elk called half a dozen of his favorite warriors to practice at throwing the tomahawk.

Young Wild West was to be the target, or, rather, they were to see how near they could come to him without hitting him.

He knew what they were up to the moment the old chief called the braves.

He was also aware of the fact that they would not harm him in the least.

They wanted to worry and terrify him if possible.

The red fiends love to torture a victim before killing him.

Six Indians lined up, each with a tomahawk in his hand.

The chief measured off the distance, and then gave the signal for them to begin.

The first pointed his tomahawk carefully and then let it whirl, apparently straight for the brave boy's head.

It struck the tree about six inches above his head and remained sticking there.

He did not flinch, and Gray Elk looked surprised.

The next of the hatchet-like weapons hit the tree very close to his left shoulder and glanced off, landing upon the ground twenty feet away.

The face of Young Wild West was slightly pale, but there was no sign of fear written on it.

He never moved a muscle.

The third Sioux hurled his tomahawk with unerring aim,

embedding it in the tree so close to the captive's right shoulder that it must certainly have grazed his clothing.

The fourth put one on his left side in a similar spot and the fifth landed between his legs at the knees, but failed to make it stick there.

There was only one left to throw now, and he was the champion of them all at that particular line of business.

He was the favorite son of the chief, called Spotted Hawk, and he was scarcely more than a boy.

He took careful aim and then let the deadly weapon drive with all his might.

As it struck it seemed that the head of Young Wild West must surely be severed from his body!

But no! The head did not drop and the brave boy did not so much as wink an eye.

So skilfully was the tomahawk thrown that the pointed blade embedded itself into the tree and allowed the handle to come squarely across the boy's neck, just touching his skin.

It was a good shot, and Gray Elk applauded his son warmly.

Something like a sigh of relief came from the lips of Wild, but he did not let the Indians know even that much.

That sort of sport was not to his liking.

He thought he had better praise the braves for their skill, so he calmly said:

"The braves of Gray Elk have good eyes and steady hands; they can throw the tomahawk as straight as the white man can shoot a bullet."

The old chief looked at him for a moment, but said nothing and walked away, followed by the six who had shown their skill.

None of them could quite understand why the captive could display such extraordinary nerve.

They believed him to be something above the common run of palefaces.

And Wild was not slow to see that he had made a deep impression on them.

But he knew that he would be subjected to all kinds of horrible tortures before the end would come, unless he made his escape ere the Sioux village was reached.

The red men now took no further notice of him, but busied themselves about getting their breakfast.

Young Wild West was watching anxiously for Arietta Murdock to appear, and presently he was gratified by seeing her led from the place where she had passed the night.

Her appearance showed that she had been awake all night. She was a brave girl, but the awful fate that was most certainly in store for her was preying heavily upon her mind.

Her hope was that the soldiers from the fort would arrive before the Indians started for their village.

She knew that she was as good as lost if they once got her there.

And Young Wild West was sure of being tortured and finally killed when they got there. She knew that, because she had heard Gray Elk tell him so shortly after they found him and made him a prisoner.

While the Sioux ate their morning meal and conversed in their own language, she kept her eyes fixed on the handsome young captive.

Ten minutes passed.

The red men got up from around the fire and made preparations to move.

A piece of half-cooked buffalo meat was tendered the girl, but she refused it.

In another ten minutes they were ready to move.

A mustang was led out and two of the red demons advanced to the tree to untie the captive and put him on the back of the animal.

Then it was that something happened that made the heart of the girl leap, and an exclamation of joy, intermingled with astonishment, came from her lips.

As the Indians stepped up to Young Wild West, his arms flew up as if by magic and a revolver in either of his hands began cracking!

He made a move forward and the buckskin thongs dropped to the ground.

The Sioux fell back in amazement, more than one biting the dust from the effects of that dreadful fire.

Other shots could be heard, too, and old Gray Elk and his followers jumped about in wild dismay.

Young Wild West made a bound for the girl, and just as he reached her there was a sudden crashing in the bushes close at hand.

The next instant Spitfire, the boy's handsome stallion, appeared!

CHAPTER VI.

A LEAP FOR LIFE OR DEATH.

Jim Dart and Robedee looked at Cheyenne Charlie in surprise when he said the Indians were camped close by, and that Young Wild West was a prisoner among them.

"I can't imagine how they managed to catch him," said Jim. "I can't even think that he would be careless enough to allow the reds to get him in their clutches."

"It's ther gal what has caused it, yer kin depend on that," remarked Jack.

"Well, no matter what was ther cause of it, he is there, an' we must try an' git him away from 'em," and Charlie began to tighten his belt as if to get himself into shape for a struggle of some sort.

"Sure!" exclaimed Jim. "Wild must be saved!"

"An' ther gal, too," added Robedee, who showed great feeling for the gentler sex, even if they were the cause of getting man into trouble.

"Sartin!" exclaimed Cheyenne Charlie. "Git yer guns ready. We've got to do some tall old shootin'. We must make ther Sioux believe that there are about fifty of us, an' while we are bangin' away right and left into 'em one of us must cut him loose."

"I'll do that, if you say so," and Jim got out his knife and drew his thumb across it to test its keenness.

"All right. Come on, then. Ther Sioux are cookin' their breakfast, an' they'll be ready to move in a few minutes."

After again making sure that their weapons were ready for instant use, the trio started out, leading their horses with them.

Cheyenne Charlie led them for about a hundred yards, and then came to a halt.

"We must leave our horses here," he said in a whisper. "It won't do to take 'em any closer."

Accordingly the steeds were hitched to saplings, and then the scout led the way cautiously through the undergrowth.

As everything was pretty well soaked from the heavy fall of rain, they were able to proceed without danger of a dry twig cracking under their feet.

The nearer they got to the Indian camp the more cautious they became.

They could hear the guttural voices of the redskins plainly, and it struck them that something out of the ordinary was taking place.

Half a minute later they were at a spot where they could look right into the camp.

It was just at this time that the six warriors were practicing at throwing their tomahawks, and three took in the situation at a single glance.

Jim Dart raised his rifle to send a bullet crashing through the brain of a brave as he raised his weapon to hurl it at the boy tied to the tree, but Charlie stayed him.

"Don't," he whispered. "They ain't goin' to hurt him. Wait till they git through. See! They don't faze him a bit. Young Wild West has got an iron nerve. As soon as they get through with what they call their fun they'll go an' git their grub. Then it will be time for us to git in our work."

So they waited until the chief and the six Indians walked away from the tree.

As Cheyenne Charlie had said, this would be the proper time to act, and so it proved to be.

Jim Dart, knife in hand, began to crawl to the tree Young Wild West was bound to.

He had to be careful, for there were Indians close by the captive, but as they were watching those who were eating the buffalo meat more than they were watching the boy it was all right.

Slowly but surely Jim neared the tree.

He felt that he must be very careful lest he surprise his friend so that the braves would notice that something was wrong.

Presently he was flat on his stomach with his hands touching the trunk of the tree.

With a quick but gentle stroke with the knife he severed the thongs that held the feet of the captive fast.

He noted that the boy moved his feet slightly as the pressure of the thongs gave way, but beyond that he remained in the same position.

Jim thought he would run the risk of tapping him on the leg to make him understand that help was at hand, so he did so.

He received nothing in the way of an answer, but he was quite sure that his presence was known.

Jim's next move was to reach up and cut the bonds that held the prisoner about the waist.

The two severed ends dropped, but the rest remained in place, so that all that was required was a move forward and the thongs would drop.

And still Young Wild West remained as immovable as a statue.

One more stroke of the knife and Wild's hands were free.

Then a heavy navy revolver was thrust in each of them, and Jim started to crawl back to his companions.

And still the boy captive remained in the same position.

Five minutes passed.

The trio of friends in the bushes could not understand what the boy was waiting for.

But they guessed a moment later when they saw the girl captive brought out.

He meant to save her!

The Sioux were getting ready for a hurried start now, and the fingers of Cheyenne Charlie were itching to press the triggers of his ever-ready revolvers.

It was not long before the time arrived for him to do so.

As Young Wild West sprang toward the Indians who approached the tree for the purpose of releasing him and tying him upon the horse the three sprang to their feet.

Then the revolvers began cracking away.

"Be careful an' make every shot tell!" exclaimed Cheyenne Charlie. "What we do has got to be done putty quick, I kin tell yer."

"Gee whiz!" cried Jack, suddenly. "If there ain't ther sorrel horse that Young Wild West broke I'm a living sinner!"

"As sure as guns!" Charlie echoed. "Look there! Did you ever see anything to beat that?"

Wild had leaped upon the back of the steed and was in the act of pulling Arietta up after him.

Half a dozen Indian braves, who had recovered themselves somewhat, were dashing forward to intercept him, and the scout and his companions at once directed their fire upon them.

Then, in a ringing voice, Cheyenne Charlie exclaimed:

"Forward, men! Dont' let a man escape! If they don't surrender shoot 'em down like dogs!"

Old Gray Elk thought as much as anything that a posse of armed men had attacked them, and he promptly gave the word to retreat.

Meanwhile the sorrel stallion bearing his double burden had leaped forward and was rapidly leaving the camp behind.

"Make a break for our horses!" cried Charlie. "We must follow Young Wild West."

They reached their horses just as the Indians realized that they had been badly tricked.

The red demons let out a combined yell and mounted to start in pursuit.

Our three friends had exhausted the chambers of their revolvers, and they had no time to load them now.

Hot after Young Wild West they sped, a score of bullets and arrows flying about their heads as they did so.

But the Sioux who owned the rifles shot high to a man, and beyond a slight arrow wound received in the arm by Jack Robedee they were not touched.

It was now to be a race for life!

Young Wild West was elated beyond measure. The change in the situation was a wonderful one.

Three things had been brought about almost in the twinkling of an eye.

He was free, the girl captive was with him, and he was on the back of his beautiful horse.

With his left arm grasping her waist, Arietta Murdock sat across the saddle in front of him.

She was remarkably cool for one in such a critical position.

"Give me one of your revolvers," she managed to articulate. "They are not empty, are they?"

"No," was the answer, "there are two shots in each, if the chambers were full when I got them, and I guess they were. We stand an excellent show of getting away, Miss Murdock, though we are not going in the direction of the Forks. This horse can beat anything the Sioux have got with them, and the only thing that worries me is that the friends who saved us may get into serious trouble."

"They are coming," said the girl a moment later, as she gave a fleeting glance behind them. "There are three of them. One is Jim Dart."

The sorrel had now reached a comparatively level stretch which ran around the base of the mountain range, and without being urged a particle he increased his speed.

"Steady, Spitfire," said his master. "We must not leave the friends who saved us too far behind. Steady, now!"

But the horse did not want to be held back, and it was with great difficulty that Wild held him down.

The shooting was still fast and furious, which told them that the Sioux thought they still had them in range.

Occasionally the whiz of a bullet could be heard, but in a minute or two more they died out altogether.

Thud—thud! Thud—thud! The hoofbeats of the three horses behind them could still be heard plainly, though at times they could not be seen at all, so dense was the undergrowth.

"Come on, boys!" called out Wild. "If our horses are fresh we will surely get away from them."

"As sure as you're born we will!" came back the answer from Cheyenne Charlie. "We're gainin' every second."

A little farther on and they came to a point where they were compelled to turn at right angles, on account of a perpendicular wall of rock.

This brought them a trifle nearer to the yelling horde of Sioux, and Wild was afraid that they might turn and intercept them by riding straight across, instead of following the winding trail they left.

If they were acquainted with that section of the country it was most certain that they would do this.

Cheyenne Charlie and his two companions were nearly two hundred yards behind the sorrel and his double burden, and the foremost of the Indians a trifle more than that distance behind them.

The growth of the trees was so dense that none of them could see the others half the time.

Suddenly the whoops of the Indians ceased.

What did this mean?

Young Wild West was undecided what to do, but he concluded to keep right on.

Five minutes later the fierce yells of the Sioux broke out afresh, coming from a point almost directly ahead this time.

Before the boy could slacken speed to turn around the Indians were right upon him.

They had taken the short cut across and had headed him off.

Young Wild West cast one swift glance around him.

A few feet ahead to his right was a narrow ravine.

It was not over six feet in width, and appeared to be the only place of refuge just then.

Holding Arietta tightly, he swerved his horse around and into the narrow defile the animal bounded.

The yells of the Indians turned to exultant cries at this move.

They did not offer to fire a shot or send an arrow after him.

It struck the boy that they must know that they had him cornered, and he nerved himself for a desperate fight.

But what had become of Cheyenne Charlie and the rest?

If they could manage to stand the redskins off till he could make a stand behind some boulder he might yet have a chance.

The swift-footed sorrel dashed up the narrow defile with the speed of the wind, and after him came the bloodthirsty savages in single file.

Arietta now raised the revolver Wild had given her, and taking a quick aim she pressed the trigger.

The bullet sped true to its mark and the foremost savage rolled from his horse, temporarily blocking the way for the others.

But it would take more than that to stop the Indians now. They were bent upon taking both the boy and girl alive, and by their actions it would seem that they felt certain of doing it.

The ravine widened slightly when a couple of hundred yards had been covered, and the next instant Young Wild West saw something that caused him to turn deathly pale.

He had just rounded a slight bend, and right in front of him, not fifty feet distant, was a yawning chasm.

On either side were perpendicular walls of rock, thus making no possible way to escape.

And the sorrel had managed to get the bit between his teeth and was running faster than ever.

In a second it would be all over.

The Sioux were yelling themselves hoarse now. They expected to see the young horseman pull up his steed and come to a halt.

But he could not have done that, anyhow.

The chasm was too wide for a horse to jump. Young Wild West saw that at a glance. At least, he had never seen a horse that could make such a jump.

On the other side of the chasm the way was clear, and if—

In that fraction of a second it flashed through the mind of the Prince of the Saddle that if the remarkable horse could make the leap he would be saved.

Realizing their awful peril, Arietta fainted from sheer fright.

Young Wild West gave the stallion free rein, and then closed his eyes.

It was certainly life or death now.

The next instant he felt the muscles of the animal quiver, and then he arose in the air.

Thud! The hoofs of the forelegs struck the other side and the boy opened his eyes. There was one long, dragging leap forward and the dreadful chasm was left behind.

Around a bend the stallion turned of his own accord, and the Indians, who had become hushed the instant they saw the leap was going to be made, broke into yells of anger and chagrin.

There was not one of them who dared urge his horse to do the fearful leap that the sorrel made with his double burden.

Wild involuntarily tightened his grip on the bridle rein, and found that he once more had Spitfire under control.

The horse had let go the bit, as much as to say, "I have done my part, now you do yours."

Half a minute later Wild found himself back on the same trail, and who should he come upon but Cheyenne Charlie and his two companions.

The trio gave a wild cheer of delight.

"Come on!" cried Jim Dart. "We have now got plain sailing over the back track."

And such was, indeed, the case. Before the Indians could get anywhere near them they were galloping for the late Indian encampment, and when this was reached they turned direct for the Forks.

They never knew whether the Sioux gave any further pursuit or not, but they did not see them again that day, and when they reached the settlement a few hours later the wonderful leap of gallant Spitfire became the theme for conversation.

CHAPTER VII.

YOUNG WILD WEST MAKES A BET.

A great ovation was given Young Wild West by the honest-hearted settlers of the Forks.

He had accomplished more by his grit and daring than any of them ever dreamed a man was capable of.

But the boy insisted that his horse and the three who had followed him and cut him free from his bonds in the Indian camp deserved the credit, and not he.

"I only did what any one else would have done if they had

the chance," he said. "I will admit that I did not let a single chance slip throughout the entire excitement, though. I started out to rescue Arietta Murdock from the Sioux, and by the help of my friends and my horse, I did rescue her. That is all there is to it. I don't want you to lionize me. I don't like flattery, so please let it go at that."

A cheer followed this little speech. Arietta stepped forward and touched Wild on the arm.

"It just occurred to me," she whispered, "that I never thanked you for saving me from the Indians. I want to do so now. Believe me when I say that I will never forget you—never."

Young Wild West blushed like a schoolboy.

"I am glad to hear you say that," he managed to find words to answer. "I—I like you very much, Miss Murdock."

"Well, don't call me miss, then; call me Arietta."

"I will if you will call me Wild."

"Very well, then, Wild. Now, if you will accept it, I shall make you a charm, such as an old squaw told me about once. It is supposed to be a thing that will save the life of a person in times of great danger. Will you wear it if I make one for you?"

"Will I wear it! Certainly, Arietta. I will only be too pleased to wear anything that was made by your hands. I am not superstitious, though, so remember that I will wear the charm just because you are going to make it with your hands, and for no other reason."

"Very well. That is quite satisfactory to me. I will have it done by to-morrow."

It was in the evening after the remarkable events of the morning that this conversation took place, and the moment that the girl came up to Young Wild West those who had been standing around withdrew.

Cheyenne Charlie and Jack Robedee had gone back to Fort Bridger, but Jim Dart was around.

He seemed to be greatly pleased with the headway Wild was making in what he was pleased to call his "little love match."

"I can see how it will all turn out some day," he said half an hour later, as the two boys got together. "You are the luckiest fellow in the West to have such a fine girl as that to fall in love with you!"

"You will do me a great kindness if you don't say anything more about it," replied Wild.

"All right, old fellow, I won't then. To see you fighting Indians one would never think you was so bashful."

"Let it drop, will you?"

Jim saw that he was in earnest, so he promptly changed the subject.

Though it was not likely that Gray Elk would bother the settlers that night, a good watch was kept.

The next morning Cheyenne Charlie rode over from the fort with a message from the commandant.

It was to the effect that the entire Sioux tribe were showing a very war-like attitude, and advised the settlers to abandon their homes and come over to Bridger to live until the trouble was over.

Old Gray Elk and two other prominent chiefs of the Sioux nation were the leaders in the movement, and the lack of the soldiers in that section made it rather unpleasant for the whites to think about.

After a talk on the subject, the settlers concluded to quit the Forks. They had the biggest part of their crops planted, and that meant a heavy loss to them.

But they had located too far away from the fort to be under its protection to any great extent, and there was no other course to pursue just now.

"Waal," observed old Sam Murdock, "if I leave ther Forks to-day I'll leave for good. I'll strike out gold huntin', 'cause farmin' are a little too slow for me, anyhow."

"Why, where would you go to, grandpop?" asked pretty Arietta, who heard the old man's remarks.

"There are plenty of places in ther mountains where they are strikin' it rich," was the reply. "If we kin settle in some live minin' town, you'll be a hundred per cent. safer than you'd be here on a farm."

"But there are very few who ever make a success at gold hunting."

"Not now. Men are strikin' it rich every day. I heard from an old pard of mine ther other day. He's gettin' rich up in ther hills, an' advises me to come there."

"Well, I shan't object. You know best."

"Yes, I ain't got a great while longer to live, an' I want to leave somethin' for you when I peg out. I've never made anythin' at farmin'."

It now being decided that they were to leave, the settlers got right at it. They hitched up their teams and placed their household effects in the wagons, many of them regretfully, as they had learned to love the place.

It did not take them a great while to get ready, and shortly before noon the wagon train started, with the cattle being driven ahead, for the fort.

Arietta owned a pretty black pony, which had been given to her by her grandfather a few months before.

She was quite at home in the saddle, and when she rode along by the side of Young Wild West, near the head of the line, the settlers' wives looked at each other and nodded significantly.

But there was no one in the entire party who would not admit that they thought them a very handsome and dashing looking couple.

The sorrel horse and the black pony both cut fine figures, and their riders did the same.

The journey to Fort Bridger was made in due time and the people at once began to form temporary headquarters, as there were not enough buildings in the place to accommodate them.

The majority of the women and children were given temporary quarters in the cabins of the residents, but the men were forced to go into camp.

The next day the work of cutting down trees and forming them into logs would begin, and then the building of cabins would follow.

According to all reports, it looked as though they would not be able to return to the Forks in some time.

If the Indians once got on the warpath for fair it was quite likely that it would be months before they would be quelled and peace once more restored.

The horsemanship and daring deeds of Young Wild West soon got noised about among the entire populace, and he received the admiring gaze of nearly every one in the little village.

We say nearly every one, for there were a few who did not seem to like him much.

There were probably half a dozen men who belonged to the lower order of common mortals, and they were the ones.

Nearly every man had something against his character, but as they had behaved themselves fairly well of late, they had been allowed all the rights and privileges of the village.

Probably the one who took the most dislike to Wild was a big, ungainly, but powerful fellow, who was known as Buck Wood.

He had not been around the day the men were trying to break the wild horse, and he had been sneering about what took place on that day ever since.

Such people are bound to find some one to listen to them and also agree with them, and while Young Wild West was busy helping the men fix up their temporary headquarters Buck Wood was telling three of his cronies what he thought of the boy.

"He's nothin' more than a young upstart, who had more luck than brains when he tackled that horse," he said. "An' as for him grabbin' ther gal from old Gray Elk's camp an' ridin' off an' jumpin' over a hole in ther ground, any one could have done that. If he goes to puttin' on any airs around me, I'll be apt to teach him that he's only a boy, an' has no business with men."

"Right yer are, Buck!" exclaimed his listeners in unison.

One of his cronies was named Andrews. He sold whiskey to the soldiers and bordermen on the sly. He agreed with everything Buck said and produced some liquor to show what a good friend he was to him.

"I'd like to show ther young tenderfoot somethin' about ridin'," observed the big bully, as he quaffed the whiskey that was handed him. "I never seed ther man that could beat me handlin' a horse yet. Bill Cody, nor Bill Hickok, nor any one else couldn't do what I did when we had a trial one day down on ther banks of the Platte, in Nebraska; an' I guess this boy can't do it."

"I should say not," chorused the listeners.

It just happened that Jim Dart was passing just then. The men were in the shanty owned by Andrews, and though the door was closed, he could hear every word that was said.

He stayed long enough to hear a whole lot more, all of which was not complimentary to his young friend.

Jim Dart did what any good friend would do. He went to Wild, and calling him aside, said:

"There are some people around here who are down on you."

"Is that so?" asked the boy in surprise. "I am sure I have not done a thing to injure any one. What appears to be the trouble, anyway?"

"Oh, they are jealous of the attention you have attracted

for what you have done. I don't think the parties amount to a great deal, though."

"Well, perhaps they don't. But I'd like to know who they are, though."

"Well, I'll point them out to you the first chance I get."

The chance did not come till the following morning, and then Jim showed Young Wild West the men as they were just about to enter Buck Wood's shanty.

Wild at once called to them, and they turned to see what he wanted.

"I'd like to ask you people if I have ever done anything to you?" he said.

"I reckon not," retorted Buck, who took it on himself to act as spokesman.

"Then what are you down on me for? Haven't I as much right to live around here as you have, as long as I mind my own business and let other people's alone?"

"See here, young feller," spoke up Andrews. "You had better keep your tongue still, or you might git into trouble."

"That's all right," answered Wild. "If you people have got anything against me, I want you to spit it out, like men would do. Do you understand what I am driving at now?"

"They tell me that you are ther champion horseman of these parts," ventured Buck Wood, who did not appear to get angry at the boy's remarks.

"I don't say so."

"Well, maybe you think you are."

"Well, I won't brag, but I think I could give you a few lessons at riding, either fancy or plain."

"You do, hey? I guess you don't know who you are talkin' to."

"No, I don't exactly know, but I'll ask Cheyenne Charlie. Perhaps he can tell me something about you."

This was a hot jab at the bully, though Wild West did not know it. Cheyenne Charlie had given Buck a sound thrashing about a month before, and the two had not spoken since.

"Oh, you needn't ask him about me. Him an' I ain't good friends. Ask any of these gentlemen here."

"Well, we will drop the asking part and allow that you are a first-class horseman. I made the assertion that I could give you lessons, and I am willing to put up money that I can."

"How much money have you got?"

"I've just got a hundred dollars, which I have been saving for the past three months. Do you want to cover it on the proposition I made?"

"Yes. Put up your money in ther hands of Andrews here."

"Oh, no! I don't know Andrews. We'll go over to the supply store and put the money up in the hands of the man who runs it. Are you satisfied with that?"

The man thought a while and then said he guessed he was.

"Well, come on then. There is no use waiting. If you can beat me at handling or riding a horse, why, you are welcome to my money, though I was a good while earning it."

The boy's straightforward and unflinching manner had brought Buck down a peg or two. He was but a big cow-

ard, at the most; but he did not want to back out from making the bet now.

Besides, he really did have a big opinion of himself, as far as his horsemanship was concerned.

The whole crowd walked up to the supply store, and seeing Young Wild West and Jim with men who bore a shady reputation, Cheyenne Charlie and some of his friends followed.

The man who kept the store was named Smith, and he promptly came out when Jim Dart told him what was wanted of him.

"You see, it is just this way," Young Wild West explained. "This man here," indicating Buck Wood, "has said that he can beat me handling a horse, and I have offered to bet him a hundred dollars that he can't. I will put the money up in your hands, and if he covers it, I am willing to compete with him as soon as he wants to."

"Oh, I'll hold the money all right," said Smith, and he promptly took the roll Wild handed him and carefully counted it. "There's just a hundred here. Come down, Buck, if you ain't trying to bluff the young fellow."

"Oh, I ain't tryin' to bluff him," was the quick retort. "I ain't got quite a hundred, but Andrews will help me out, I guess."

"That I will," spoke up his chum, and the money was soon counted and placed in Smith's hands, along with Wild's.

By this time at least twenty men had gathered in front of the store, and when they heard what the bet was they felt sorry for Buck.

While he was an excellent rider and had the tricks of cowboys, greasers and Indians down pretty fine, they knew that he was no match for Young Wild West.

What the boy had done with the wild stallion was enough to make them think that way.

"I'll go an' git my horse," remarked Buck, turning away. "I'm ready now."

"So am I," nodded Wild. "I'll be ready as soon as you are."

As the big bully left the crowd, Cheyenne Charlie heard him remark to Andrews:

"If that boy does win the money, I'll give him ther worst beatin' he ever had, see if I don't."

"You will, hey?" muttered Charlie, as he turned his head so as to not let it be known that he heard the remark. "I don't believe you could give ther boy a beatin', as big as you are, if he had a square show. Anyhow, if you kin, why, I'll see to it that you don't."

CHAPTER VIII.

WILD DEFEATS BUCK WOOD.

Young Wild West went straight to the place where he had rigged a sort of stable for his horse.

The handsome animal appeared to be perfectly contented, though he did not like any one else to come near him.

He pricked up his ears and gave a whinny as the boy approached, and was caressed in return.

"Old fellow, I want you to behave yourself fine for a little while. I am going to teach a big bluff of a man a lesson."

It was not possible for Spitfire to understand, but he seemed to, just the same, for he gave another whinny and rubbed the boy's shoulder with his nose.

Wild saddled and bridled him without the least difficulty. It seemed as though the horse had never been a wild one.

A few minutes later he rode out into the single road or street of the village and made for the supply store.

A larger crowd than ever had collected by this time, and every one was on the tiptoe of excitement.

A cheer greeted the appearance of Young Wild West, as the sorrel cantered up and came to a halt with arched neck and flowing mane.

Buck Wood appeared a moment later. He was mounted on a rather fine specimen of horseflesh, and in spite of his somewhat ungainly figure, he made a good appearance in the saddle.

Just about four men gave him a cheer as he rode up, and he took off his broad sombrero and waved it cowboy fashion.

"Who's goin' to be ther judge of this here business?" he demanded, looking around with as fierce an expression as he could possibly put on.

This was done for the benefit of Wild alone. It could not possibly have any effect on any one who knew him.

"Won't the stakeholder do?" retorted Wild.

"Well, there oughter be three judges."

"All right. I'll name Cheyenne Charlie for one; now, you name the other."

"That gives you ther namin' of two, and me only one."

"Oh, have it any way you like. Name them all, if you want to."

This shamed the man somewhat, and after a little talk it was decided that Smith, the stakeholder, Cheyenne Charlie and Andrews were to act.

The place on the prairie where the sorrel had been broken was selected for the match, and the crowd followed the two principals to it.

"Now, then," observed Buck, "ther first thing we'd better do is to ride a race straight ahead, ther speed of ther horse not to count, but ther way ther man sits in ther saddle an' manages ther horse."

"All right," answered Wild. "The judges will please tell us how far to go before we turn and come back."

This was quickly settled upon, and the two horses drew up alongside each other.

Spitfire was so spirited that Wild could not stop him from dancing, but he got him quiet enough to make the start.

"One, two, three—go!" exclaimed Smith, and they were off.

Young Wild West found that he could easily outdistance the other horse, but he did not want to, as the judges were to pass on the style in which they rode.

Wild answered to every move of the steed under him, and

Buck came pretty close to doing the same, but not quite. He had never seen the boy ride before, and he knew he was defeated in the first trial before the turn was made.

But he did his best coming back, and said nothing when the race was decided in favor of Wild by a vote of two to one.

Andrews, of course, voted that Buck did the best, but that was to be expected of him, so no one seemed at all surprised.

"You can beat me in that, maybe, but now I'll show you something that you can't do," exclaimed the bully. "Who's got a nose-rag in the crowd?"

Smith at once produced a handkerchief and handed it to him.

"Remember," said Buck, looking at the judges, "he's got to do this trick to be even with me, an' to beat me on it he's got to go me one better."

"All right," was the reply. "Go ahead."

Without any further remarks, he rode out about a couple of hundred yards and dropped the handkerchief on the ground. Then he came back, and wheeling his horse around, started him at full speed for it.

As he neared it he suddenly stooped and picked it up with his left hand, and wheeling his horse, came galloping back with the handkerchief in his hand.

In those days this was considered a great feat by the cowboys and border men, and there were but few who could do it.

Buck received quite a round of applause, and then it came Young Wild West's turn.

The boy did not appear to be the least bit concerned over what had been done, and noticing this his friends felt satisfied that he could do the trick all right.

Wild placed the handkerchief in about the same spot, and then coming back made a dash for it, and picked it up with the greatest of ease.

"How was that?" asked Cheyenne Charlie, turning to the other two judges. "That was done neat enough, wasn't it?"

"I should say it was," replied Smith, while Andrews said not a word.

But Young Wild West was not done with that particular trick yet. He produced another handkerchief, and taking both of them with him, galloped out again.

He dropped them on the ground about thirty feet apart, and when he came to a halt he was in a straight line with them.

The men did not know exactly what he was going to do, and Buck Wood shrugged his shoulders uneasily.

The next minute Wild came riding toward the handkerchiefs at a breakneck speed.

It seemed that his horse was going right over them.

But as he neared the first one he swerved the sorrel to the right, and stooping down picked it up; then, as quick as a flash from a gun, the sorrel turned the other way, and he grabbed the other handkerchief.

"If you can do that, Mr. Buck Wood, you will surprise

me," observed Wild, as he rode back to the group with a prolonged cheer ringing in his ears.

"Humph!" exclaimed the big bully, in a voice of scorn. "I reckon I kin do that easy enough. I've done it more than a thousand times."

Now, Young Wild West had never seen any one do it but himself, and he doubted very much that Buck had seen it done before, let alone doing it himself.

And he was right. Buck had never even attempted the feat before, but he felt that he could do it now, so he put on a bold front over it.

He was just a little nervous when he rode out to drop the handkerchiefs, though. He did not know exactly how far apart to place them.

But he placed them the best he knew how, and then got ready to do the trick.

The crowd watched him with interest, for nearly all of the men thought that it was just possible that he could pick up the two, as he had picked up the one.

But they did not stop to consider how difficult it was to change positions so quickly, both in the horse and rider.

When Buck got ready he started his horse at the top of its speed straight for the handkerchiefs.

He stooped for the first one and missed it, and when he made an effort to get the other he had passed it by a dozen feet.

Instead of a cheer a laugh went up from the men this time.

Buck Wood was very mad.

He wanted another chance.

As there were no such arrangements in the terms of the contest, the judges did not know about giving him another chance at the same thing.

"Oh, yes! Give him three chances," said Young Wild West. "He couldn't do it if he had a dozen trials, though."

"I'll show you this time," he bellowed out, and this time he placed the handkerchiefs further apart.

Every one in the crowd noticed that they were twice as far apart as they had been when Wild performed the feat.

It would be much easier to do it this way.

But no one said anything. They wanted to see if Buck could do it that way.

He soon got ready, and toward the two handkerchiefs he came dashing.

He managed to pick up the first handkerchief this time, but made a miserable miss of the second.

"You can't do it!" yelled out some one in the crowd; "and if you could you would twist yourself all out of shape and never get straight again."

This brought a loud laugh, and the big bully began to grow mad.

"I ain't beat out yet!" he cried. "There's one more thing I want to try afore we git through, an' if I win that I think I ought to have another chance at ther handkerchiefs."

"You can have another show now," called out Young Wild West.

"No, I'll wait. If I don't beat you in this next trick I won't ask for it."

The judges said all right, and the bully, now somewhat cool again, made preparations for the wonderful feat of horsemanship he was going to perform.

He had come prepared for it, for riding up to Andrews he asked him for the package he had carried over for him.

Young Wild West had no idea of what the feat was going to be, and came up close to see what the package contained. When it was opened a laugh went up from the men.

"Potatoes!" exclaimed Jack Robedee. "What is he going to do, cook dinner for us?"

"I think not," retorted Wild. "I have an idea he is going to shoot at the potatoes as they are thrown up in the air for him."

"An' you've got jest ther right idea," said Buck. "Did yer ever try your hand at it?"

"Oh, I believe I have a few times."

The bully's countenance lengthened again.

"What don't ther boy know?" he asked himself.

"Go ahead and show me what you are going to do," said Wild.

"All right. You jest take six of these potatoes an' ride alongside of me, an' throw 'em up as fast as I tell you, an' I'll show you how I kin shoot while in ther saddle."

"I'll do just as you say, Mr. Buck Wood. Hand over the vegetables."

Buck counted out six of the largest potatoes and gave them to Wild.

"Now, when the judges say 'go' we'll start," said the bully. "Every time I say 'now' you let a potato go up in the air about twenty feet ahead of me."

"I think I understand the thing thoroughly," was the calm reply. "I am ready."

Presently the "One, two, three—go!" came from the judges, and away they darted.

At the first call Young Wild West threw the potato just where he wanted it, and Buck split it as nicely as you please with a shot from his revolver.

The next one he missed, though it was no fault of the manner in which it was thrown.

The third and fourth were missed, also, but the fifth and sixth were hit.

That was pretty good shooting, and there was no one who witnessed it that said it wasn't.

Riding at full speed on horseback and shooting such small objects as potatoes as they were thrown in the air is no small thing to do.

And with a revolver, too! It might be quite an easy thing to do with a shotgun.

Buck had practiced more than a year to do the thing, but he seldom hit more than half of what he shot at.

But that was good enough for that kind of shooting.

He thought he surely had his opponent on this, and so did a great many of the men in the crowd.

But Young Wild West did not appear to be disturbed in the least.

He came up smiling when it was his turn, and though

he took particular note that the potatoes Buck picked out were somewhat smaller than the others, he said nothing.

"Are you ready?" asked the judges.

"Yes," answered Wild.

The signal was given, and off they went.

The first potato Buck threw too far out of the way, and Wild did not shoot at it.

He cast a look at the man which meant more than words could say, and the result was that the next one went up in the right style.

Crack! The vegetable flew in pieces.

Young Wild West had hit the first he shot at.

He gave the word for the third one to go up.

It went, and though it was not thrown exactly as it should have been, he hit it.

"That's two for ther prince of ther saddle," yelled out Jack Robedee from the crowd.

The fourth potato Wild did not shoot at.

"No more of that," he said to Buck. "You throw them right, do you hear?"

The bully scowled fiercely, but made no reply. However, the fifth potato went up right and Wild cut it in two.

"Three to three, and one more shot for Young Wild West!" sang out some one in the crowd.

"Yes, and he ain't gittin' a square show, either," said another.

"We'll see about that when the judges decide," observed Cheyenne Charlie.

Wild now urged his horse forward at a faster gait, and called Buck to keep up with him.

"Let the last potato go!" he exclaimed a moment later.

The bully did let it go, throwing it much higher than he had any of those before.

Though he was not aware of it, this was just what Wild wanted him to do.

Then it was that a simultaneous gasp of astonishment came from the men in the crowd.

Young Wild West did not shoot at the potato from his regular position in the saddle. He swung himself downward similar to the way he had done when he picked up the handkerchief, and then as the potato was descending on the other side of his horse he shot from beneath the animal's belly, and split it in a hundred pieces.

This remarkable feat nearly took Buck Wood's breath away.

He knew he was beaten—very badly beaten—but he was not man enough to ride up to his conqueror and shake hands with him. He was not made of that sort of stuff.

Instead of this, he rode off for the village, using some hard "cuss" words as he did so.

Every man in the crowd congratulated Wild, even to Andrews. Such riding and shooting they had never seen before, and they wanted to shake hands with the one who could do it.

Smith handed the two hundred dollars over to the winner, and he put it in his pocket.

"I made that two hundred pretty easy," remarked Wild. "I wouldn't mind doing the same thing every day."

"Any one as says Young Wild West ain't ther prince of ther saddle is a liar!" yelled Cheyenne Charlie, who was so elated at the result of the contest that he could scarcely contain himself.

If any one had contradicted his statement just then the services of a grave digger would have been required very soon.

But no one was willing to contradict him, though Andrews and Buck's other pals felt pretty sore over the defeat of their idol.

When Wild turned around he found that a great many more had witnessed the exhibition than those who had come out on the prairie at the start.

The commandant and other officers of the fort were sitting close by on horseback, and not far away were three or four ladies, one of whom was Arietta Murdock.

"Oh, Wild!" she exclaimed, when he rode up to her to receive her congratulations, "you don't know how good it made me feel to see you beat that man at his own games."

"Well, Arietta, it makes me feel good, too, and, besides, I am just a hundred dollars richer."

"So you will keep the hundred dollars you won from him, then?"

"Certainly. Why not?"

"Oh, I heard some one remark just now that you would most likely give it back to him."

"Well, little one, whoever thinks that way is very much mistaken. I won the money fair and square, and I consider it is mine just as much as though I had been hired to give that exhibition by some one. I was not betting on a sure thing, you know, so I was taking no advantage whatever."

"Oh, if you say it is right, I am sure it is, Wild."

"That's it. Now, if you hear anybody else say that I ought to give the money back to Buck Wood just tell them that it was he who issued the challenge, and that you think I won it fair."

"I will, Wild."

The two rode back to the village together.

Just as they entered it Buck Wood rode past them and made a remark that was not complimentary to either Wild or his fair companion.

Instantly our hero's blood was aroused.

As quick as a flash he urged Spitfire forward, and seizing the big cur by the shoulder he pulled him from the saddle.

He had dismounted by the time Buck was squarely on his feet, and facing him he exclaimed:

"You have got to apologize for that remark you made or else take a thrashing."

CHAPTER IX.

THE RIDE TO FORT M'DONOUGH.

If the big cowboy had been surprised at the boy defeating him at his own tricks, he was more so now.

To think that he would dare to challenge him to a fight was more than Buck could understand.

He was at least a head taller than Young Wild West, and he was known to be almost as powerful as an ox!

"Wha—what!" he gasped. "You thrash me?"

"Yes," was the cool rejoinder; "if you don't apologize for that remark you made just now, I will surely thrash you."

The bully had all along been itching to teach the boy what he termed a lesson, and the only thing that kept him from attacking him was the presence of Cheyenne Charlie.

But that man was not in sight just now, and that is the reason he had insulted Wild as he rode by.

He did not expect the boy would dare to resent it, and he meant to turn, ride back and slap the young fellow in the face.

And now the boy was going to thrash him!

Buck drew a long breath and burst into a laugh.

"So if I don't apologize, you are goin' to lick me, hey?"

"Yes, and if you attempt to use a weapon in the scrimmage, I'll kill you. Just bear that in mind before I start in."

"See here, youngster," and he made a grab to get Wild by the collar. "I'll jest——"

Just what he meant to say will never be known, for at that instant Young Wild West's fist caught him in the mouth, and he staggered back as though he had been kicked by a government mule.

"Rip-roarin' snakes!" yelled the now thoroughly enraged bully; "I'll break every bone in your body for hittin' me like that when I wasn't lookin'!"

Bump! Spat! Wild caught him a hard one just above his belt with his left, and then landed a right swing on his face.

Down he went in a confused heap. He struggled wildly to get upon his feet, but failing, fell forward on his stomach and remained perfectly quiet.

A number of men came running up just then, and they began whooping and shouting, almost bursting with merriment at the downfall of Buck.

"Git up an' fight like a man!" one shouted.

"Don't go to sleep!" cried another.

"You oughter whip a whole regiment of boys. You're big enough."

"Come, git up!"

These and a whole lot more of similar sayings rang out. In about fifteen seconds Buck got up.

He was a little dazed, but mad as a hornet.

He made a rush as though to annihilate Wild on the spot, but the agile young scout stepped aside, and putting out his foot, tripped him and sent him to the ground again.

The burst of laughter that went up was almost deafening.

Young Wild West, as cool as though he was watching a company of soldiers at their drill, waited for him to get up and get his balance.

Then he sailed in and knocked him down again with a straight right in the jaw.

Few persons knew anything about the art of boxing in those days, but Wild was one of the few.

He had lived part of his life in a hustling city and learned it from the street boys there.

There was not a man at Fort Bridger that could defeat him at a stand-off fight, and those who witnessed the remarkable bout were ready to admit this.

"I've got enough!" bawled the bully as he went down the last time. "Let me alone, will you?"

"Are you going to apologize for what you said?" demanded Wild.

"Yes, I'll never say anything like that ag'in."

"All right. Get up, then, and mind that you keep your word."

Buck got up, and taking his horse from the man who had caught him and stood holding him, he walked away from the spot.

He did not have the strength to get in the saddle, and his eyes were rapidly closing from the effects of the blows he had received in the face.

And he had not even touched Young Wild West during the entire scrimmage.

This made the boy more popular than ever with his many friends.

Mounting Spitfire, who was being held by Arietta a few yards off, Wild rode for the shanty the girl was stopping at, with her at his side.

"I could not help wait and see you thrash that man," she said; "though I was afraid you couldn't do it."

"It was easy enough, wasn't it?" he laughed. "I am not afraid of such men as he. It does not take me many minutes to form an impression of a person, and I knew what he was the moment I first saw him."

"But don't you think he will try and get revenge for what you have done to him to-day?"

"If he does he'll get the worst of it, or my name is not Young Wild West."

"I wish you would be very careful, though, for my sake."

"I will, Arietta—for your sake. Don't worry about me getting hurt by such men as Buck Wood. They are too cowardly to do anything. But I will keep an eye on him just the same."

Late that afternoon Cheyenne Charlie sought out Young Wild West and said:

"I was sorry I missed the fight; if I had known it was going to take place, I would have followed you in from the prairie, but was in vited to join in a game of cards with a lieutenant and corporal, and could not resist temptation."

"Well, it wasn't much of a fight. I had no trouble in giving him more than he wanted. He don't know the least thing about the art of self-defense, as far as the use of Nature's weapons are concerned."

"Well, I must say that I don't myself. I've always done my fightin' with a gun or a huntin' knife."

"Is that so? Well, I have done a little of that kind, too. You see, I have been compelled to fight my own way ever since my foster father died, and I have come in contact with

all kinds of people and all kinds of fighting. How did you make out in your game of cards?"

"Oh, I lost about thirty dollars. I didn't have any luck to-day."

"So you were playing for money, then?"

"Oh, yes. There wouldn't be any fun in it unless you was."

"And the soldiers won your money?"

"Yes, about thirty dollars in gold. But I'll get it back again."

"I don't believe in playing draw poker, and I never have, only when it has been necessary."

"Necessary? What do you mean by that?"

"Why, when you are trying to find out something about a man, and the only way to get on confidential terms with him is to sit in a game with him. That's what I mean. I have been through that sort of thing, you know."

"And how did you make out when you played?"

"Oh, I never lost anything."

Cheyenne Charlie looked admiringly at his young friend.

"It seems to me that you are up to snuff on about everything that's goin'," he observed. "But I want to tell you what I come to see you about. Ther boss at ther fort asked me if I wouldn't git you to go out on a little scout to-night. He seems to be a little worried about ther Sioux. Heard bad news about 'em, I guess."

"Go with you? Certainly I will. I am glad of the chance."

"Well, we'll strike out at sundown then. Be ready, an' I'll come fer yer."

"Only you and I are going?"

"Yes, that's enough."

"All right. I'll be ready."

The sun was just sinking in the west when Cheyenne Charlie came around.

Young Wild West was all ready for him, and he quickly mounted Spitfire.

The two rode off in the direction of the Forks.

"They have got an idea up at ther fort that ther Indians will come around and finish up ther settlement to-night," said the scout as they rode along.

"Don't they know that the people have left the place?"

"'Tain't likely they do. Ther warmin' up we give 'em ther other night has kinder kept 'em away, I guess, an' they think ther settlers are still at ther Forks."

"Is that all you have got to do, go down and see if the Sioux show up?"

"Oh, no. I've got a message to take over to General Brooks, at Fort McDonough, which is about fifty miles from here. This here job is goin' to take us two days an' a night. providin' we don't git nabbed by ther Sioux."

"We'll run that risk."

"That's right. If we can't get to Fort McDonough, I don't think any one else kin."

"I wish you had told me that we were to be away so long," said Wild, after a pause.

"Why?"

"Well, you see, I told some one that I'd be back by morn-ing."

"That is jest ther reason I didn't tell yer. I thought yer wouldn't go if I said it was goin' to take so long to make ther trip. Never mind, Wild. Ther gal kin wait an extra day to see yer. She'll hear where we are gone before an hour has passed, an' then she won't expect you back so soon."

Young Wild West changed the subject. The scout had hit him in a tender spot, for Arietta was really the person he alluded to.

The stars were shining brightly, and there was a new moon, so they could see over the vast scope of prairie pretty well as they cantered along.

When they were within a mile of the settlement at the Forks they came to a halt and listened for a few minutes.

Presently they heard the call of the whippoorwill in the distance.

Cheyenne Charlie nudged Wild.

"Did you hear that?" he asked.

"Yes," was the reply. "That call was not made by a bird."

"No, it was made by a redskin. They are close at hand. They are sneaking up under cover of ther tall grass."

"Then they surely don't know that the settlers have deserted the place."

"No, they don't know it."

"Well, what will we do?"

"We'll wait an' see 'em git fooled, and then put a few shots in 'em an' then ride off to the east for Fort McDonough."

"A good idea."

Five minutes later there were more calls similar to the notes of the whippoorwill, and then all was silent as the grave.

"It puzzles 'em 'cause there ain't no lights to be seen in ther cabins," said Charlie.

"There are only two conclusions for them to draw."

"What are they?"

"Why, that the settlers have deserted the place, or else they are aware that an attack is to be made, and are lying low under the cover of the darkness, so the Indians will have no lights to direct their shooting at."

"That's it, I guess. Ah! There they go!"

Sure enough! The heads and shoulders of a band of fully a hundred Sioux suddenly appeared above the tall grass, and with a war-whoop they dashed toward the deserted cluster of cabins.

Our two friends could dimly see their outlines in the distance, and urging their horses forward, they started in pursuit.

The Indians were on foot, having left their horses in some hiding place farther back.

Two minutes later they opened fire on the settlement, and the moment they did so Young Wild West and Cheyenne Charlie began shooting at them from the rear.

"Let 'em have it!" exclaimed the latter. "As soon as we empty our shootin' irons, we'll make a break an' try an' find

their horses, so we kin stampede 'em. That will put 'em out of sorts for a while."

When they had emptied their rifles and revolvers, the two daring riders turned and rode for the point they believed the Indians' horses to be.

It was for the lower end of the timber strip that they rode, and they were not disappointed when they got there.

Half a dozen Indian boys were in charge of the animals, but they fled the instant they saw the two whites approaching, and then it was easy enough to stampede the animals.

In less than five minutes they had the mustangs and ponies running in all directions over the prairie.

"Now we will go on about our business," said Young Wild West.

They did so, and long before they got out of hearing the Sioux warriors had discovered how they had been fooled and were doing their best to catch their horses.

Our two friends were not afraid of being pursued by that band, but they knew they would have to be on the lookout for others, as the woods were full of them, to use the expression.

Luck was with them, it seemed, for about nine o'clock the next morning they reached Fort McDonough, after taking it pretty easy all the way.

The message, which was an important one, was delivered to General Brooks, and the two scouts were commended for their excellent work.

In order to give their horses a rest they must wait till sundown before starting on the back track.

But during that day startling things took place.

Old Sitting Bull himself had taken charge of the allied tribes and the Indian war, which, though not a very long one at that time, was declared.

Young Wild West and Cheyenne Charlie were cautioned—nay, almost commanded not to go back to Fort Bridger.

The Indians were said to be as thick as fleas in the section they would have to pass through.

But Wild was anxious to get back, and Charlie agreed to make the attempt with him.

So at sundown they started, and more than one man at the fort remarked that it was not possible for them to run the gauntlet and reach Bridger alive.

A troop of cavalry had been started that afternoon to protect a settlement just north of the route to Bridger, and our two daring friends argued that they ought to pass the worst of the Indian horde by taking a route a little to the south of this.

CHAPTER X.

WHAT BUCK WOOD DID.

Though Buck Wood was a coward he was of a very vengeful disposition.

He wanted to be revenged upon Young Wild West, somehow, but he knew not just how to go at it.

When he had pondered over it awhile he at last hit upon

a plan whereby he might have revenge upon the boy who had won the hundred dollars and wrested his laurels from him.

As has been intimated, Buck was a pretty bad character. He really had more friends among the Indians than he did among the whites at the settlement.

He was on the best of terms with Gray Elk, the Sioux chief, having associated with him a great deal while the Indians were living on terms of peace.

The plan Buck Wood had hit upon was to go and find Gray Elk, and get him to put an end to Young Wild West.

Then the cowardly villain felt that he would be satisfied.

If, in order to kill Wild, several other whites went under, too, it mattered not to him.

He had little feeling in the black heart he possessed.

He went over to the cabin Andrews lived in, that night, and after buying a drink of whiskey, said:

"I'm goin' to take a little ride out toward ther mountains. Can't you fix me up with a couple of quarts of liquor to take with me?"

"What are you goin' out that way for?" asked Andrews.

"I want to see old Gray Elk, an' have a talk with him."

"What for?"

"Oh, I've got a little private business on hand."

"You an' Gray Elk are all right, then?"

"Oh, yes! He's one of ther best friends I've got. I want ther whiskey for him, you know."

Andrews did not appear to notice the request for the whiskey at all.

"You'll run a sort of risk goin' out on ther prairie jest now. Ther reds are out for blood, an' some of them what don't know you might git hold of you," he said.

"I know about all ther young chiefs under Gray Elk, so I won't be in any danger. Ther chances are that ther very first ones I run across will know me. If they don't it's most likely they've heard of me. Anyhow, I'm goin to chance it."

"You must want to see ther chief putty bad."

"I do. See here! I'm goin' to put him on to Young Wild West an' Cheyenne Charlie. They've gone over to Fort McDonough to take a message. I found this out a few minutes ago when they started. I heard old man Murdock's daughter tellin' one of ther women about it. If Gray Elk knows this he will be on ther lookout for 'em when they come back, an' then he'll soon make an end of 'em. This place would be a good deal better off without either of 'em, I reckon."

"I reckon it would."

"Well, are you goin' to let me have half a gallon of whiskey to take to ther chief?"

"Yes; but you musn't forgit to pay me for it. You are putty well in my debt, now, you know."

"Yes; I know. But I'll pay you every cent I owe you, jest as sure as I live. If I go under through a mistake of ther Injuns you'll never git a cent, an' if I don't you'll git it all. You ought to be willin' to take your chances on it."

"Well, I reckon I will."

"Good enough! Put ther stuff in four cantéens, will you?"

"All right."

In a few minutes Buck Wood was rigged out, and then after accepting a stiff horn from Andrews he went out and got his horse, which had just finished feeding.

He had seen Young Wild West and Cheyenne Charlie go before he went in to see Andrews, and when he took his departure he was not over twenty minutes behind them.

But he did not attempt to follow them, knowing that he would be treated pretty roughly if they found him on their track.

Still, he was going over the same trail they had taken, for like them, he believed that the Sioux would return to make an attack on the settlement at the Forks that night.

When he was within a mile of the settlement he heard the sound of firearms in the distance, and he at once came to a halt.

"What in blazes kin be ther matter?" he exclaimed. "There ain't any one livin' at ther Forks. Mebbe Gray Elk thinks there is some one there, though, an' ain't found out ther difference yet. But I'll jest wait here awhile, anyhow."

Several more shots were fired, and then all was as still as the grave.

It was a bright, starlight night, and Buck Wood sat there waiting in the saddle.

He did not want to get mixed up in any fighting just then, for it might be that Young Wild West and Cheyenne were the ones the Indians had been shooting at.

And then, again, it struck him that it might have been a troop of soldiers who had been doing the shooting.

After thinking the matter over for a while, and hearing no further sounds to indicate that there were any men, either whites or reds, about, he urged his horse forward in the direction the shots had come from.

He had not proceeded far when he heard the sound of hoofs in all directions, it seemed.

Again the coward came to a halt.

Then he looked carefully to the right and left, and noticed several riderless horses galloping about.

"Looks though there has been a stampede," he muttered.

The more he thought over it the more curious he became to learn what the trouble was.

Finally, he concluded to catch some of the horses.

The animals were not running away in a straight line, but were going about in a circle.

Occasionally they would stop and feed on the luxuriant grass for a moment, and then go galloping away again.

Wood rode forward and soon caught one of them.

The moment he did so he gave a satisfied nod.

"Sioux ponies!" he exclaimed. "I know what ther trouble is now. Young Wild West an' Cheyenne Charlie have sneaked up an' stampeded ther horses while Gray Elk an' his gang was creepin' up to ther deserted settlement. That are what I call a dirty trick."

That one utterance of the man told what a villain he was, better than a whole page could do.

He called it a dirty trick for two whites to stampede the ponies of a hostile band of Indians.

But let that be as it may, Buck Wood knew a thing or two about getting a herd of stampeded horses together.

Leading the one he had caught, he began riding among them, calling out a gentle "whoa" now and then.

The result was all he could wish for, as he soon had at least fifty of them following him.

All this did not take him more than ten minutes, and at the end of that time he saw a couple of riders coming toward him.

They were Indians, who had caught the horses and started out to do what he had been doing for them.

"Hello, you fellers!" he called out. "Where is Gray Elk? I've done ther best I could for you."

"Ugh!" grunted one of the Sioux, as he rode up to the side of the white man, his tomahawk swinging in his hand.

"It's me, Buck Wood, a friend of ther chief!" cried the villain, noticing the hostile movement.

The next thing he knew he was seized by the collar and dragged from the saddle.

"Pale face heap much fool!" cried the redskin, who had him in his grasp. "He go to Gray Elk, and then lose his scalp!"

"I'm a friend of ther chief, I tell you!" Buck protested. "Don't you see that I have been catchin' your ponies for yer? Take me to Gray Elk, right away. I ain't goin' to try to run away."

It so happened that the other brave knew him, and a moment later Buck was released.

But they kept a watchful eye on him, just the same.

An Indian is very suspicious, more especially when he is dealing with a white man.

The fellow who had pulled Wood from his horse kept close to him as he helped them to corral the ponies.

More of them kept running up on foot now, and as fast as they got their horses they started in to help catch the others.

In a trifle over half an hour all had their mounts back again, and then it was found that there were half a dozen riderless steeds yet.

These had belonged to those who had fallen before the unerring aim of Wild and Charlie.

A few minutes later Buck Wood was taken before Gray Elk.

The chief was in a very ugly mood, but he greeted the villain friendly for all that.

"I know who it was who played ther trick on you, chief," said Wood. "It was that boy they call Young Wild West an' Cheyenne Charlie, ther scout from ther fort."

"Ugh! Gray Elk must have their scalps," was the reply. "Buck Wood, he heap big brave. He friend of Sioux; he help me catch the pale faces."

"You're right, I will, Gray Elk. I'll shoot 'em both myself, if I git ther chance."

"No shoot 'em; catch alive and then burn at the stake."

"All right, chief," and then putting his mouth close to the old scoundrel's ear, he added in a whisper:

"I've got some fire-water."

"Ugh!" answered the chief, and a pleased expression crossed his face.

Buck handed one of the canteens over to him.

Gray Elk unscrewed the stopper and drank half its contents without stopping.

Then after a slight breathing spell he swallowed the rest of it.

"Good fire-water; Buck Wood heap big brave. Now, we go to catch boy and scout from fort."

"I guess I'll have a little drink myself," observed Buck, as he produced another canteen from one of his pockets.

He took a pull at it and was about to put it back in his pocket when the redskin took it from his hand.

"Me want more fire-water," was the laconic remark.

"Go ahead an' drink, chief."

He did go ahead and drink, too, not stopping till the second canteen was empty.

And that was enough for him just then, for it took effect upon him immediately.

At first he was inclined to be ugly, but after uttering his old familiar warwhoop two or three times he slid from the back of his pony and fell into a stupor.

Then the chiefs under Gray Elk crowded around Buck Wood and demanded whiskey of him.

"I'll give you all I have got," he said, and he did so.

He tried to make them save a little for the old fellow when he came to, but it was useless, they went at it so eagerly that it was soon all gone.

There was nothing left for the Indians to do now but to go in camp right there.

Old Gray Elk was too drunk to stay on his horse, and besides, the chiefs under him knew they dared not do anything in opposition to his will.

If they went on and took him along with them in his unconscious condition, he would surely censure them for it when he awoke.

As the settlement was deserted they had no fears of being attacked, so a camp fire was at once started, and the tents they had with them were put up.

The sun was up when Gray Elk awoke.

Buck Wood was seated before a fire broiling a piece of buffalo meat, when the old fellow came staggering up to him.

"Gray Elk want some more fire-water!" he said in an ugly voice.

"I ain't got a drop, chief," was the reply. "Ther other fellers took it all away from me, last night, after you caved in."

The redskin knew who he meant by the "other fellers," and he promptly flew into a passion.

To ease his mind he began to kick Wood all about the camp.

The villain ached in every joint by the time Gray Elk's spite was vented, and the other chiefs laughed in their own peculiar way.

Half an hour later the band got in motion.

It was the old chief's intent to get on the trail that led

from Fort McDonough to Fort Bridger and be on the lookout for stray wagon trains.

He knew that the general uprising of the Sioux must be known to the whites now, and that being the case, those living in the few scattered settlements would be making for the forts.

And in doing this they would naturally head for the trail leading to the forts.

That Gray Elk judged rightly was made evident shortly before noon.

A small train of three wagons was discovered by two of the scouts, who had been sent out in advance of the band.

There were only a dozen men, women and children with the wagons, so the outfit must fall an easy victim to the red fiends.

Gray Elk no sooner received the report than he gave the command to make for the train.

The Indians rode at a swift pace, taking little pains to conceal their approach.

They knew they would catch them, anyhow.

In about ten minutes the copper skinned horde, with the white renegade in their midst, sighted the three wagons.

The wagons were being drawn by oxen, and there appeared to be only six horses in the train. This pleased the red men greatly, as they were sure now that their intended victims would have no show to get away.

There were not enough horses for the purpose.

The white men and their families, who were striving hard to reach a place of safety, did not observe the red fiends until they were within half a mile of them.

Then they urged the oxen forward in a vain attempt to escape.

A couple of minutes later the Sioux began to fire.

Realizing that their only hope lay in making a stand, the little band of settlers halted and drew the wagons together.

Then they returned the fire with good effect, as almost every shot sent a riderless pony over the plains.

But the contest was too unequal to last long.

Gradually the yelling horde of demons drew nearer, and presently the real slaughter began.

One by one the brave band of whites went under, and in a few minutes there was only one left to tell the tale.

This was a young woman. She had mounted a horse and was riding away when Buck Wood saw her.

A young chief named Dead Leaves caught sight of her about the same time.

Instantly the white scoundrel and the red fiend started in pursuit.

They had not gone over a dozen yards when Gray Elk saw them.

"Ugh!" he cried. "Dead Leaves and Buck Wood race for the pale face maiden. The one who catches her have her for his squaw."

When his followers heard him say this not one of them made a move to join in the pursuit.

They knew that the old chief's word was law, as far as they were concerned, and they were compelled to be satisfied

that the white man should have the chance to race for a bride.

Meanwhile, Buck and the chief were neck and neck in the race.

But the horse ridden by the young woman was a fleet footed animal, and they were not gaining on her a particle.

Both had heard the words of the chief, and both were bent on winning the prize.

"Ugh!" exclaimed the young chief, "pale face's horse run fast."

"You kin bet on that, Dead Leaves!" retorted Buck. "I reckon that ther gal are goin' to be mine. I seen her first, anyway."

"Buck has a crooked tongue; Dead Leaves see her first."

"That's all right. You kin call me a liar, if you want, but this here race is goin' to be a square one, an' if I git her first she is mine, understand," and with that Buck urged his steed forward at a faster gait, and got nearly a length ahead of his rival.

The plucky young woman, who was racing so hard for her life, suddenly left the trail and headed for a growth of alders that was on the bank of a stream about half a mile away, and her pursuers at once veered around on their course and followed.

The Indians did not attempt to follow them to see who would be the victor; they were too busy in rifling the contents of the wagons and stripping their victims of their scalps for that.

Just as the fugitive neared the growth of alders her pursuers began to gain on her.

The horse she rode was a poor one and was giving out.

The animal had been good on a spurt, but could not hold out.

Dead Leaves uttered a yell of triumph.

He did not seem to worry a bit over the fact that Buck Wood led him by a length.

Buck was not so thick headed but that he took in the situation.

He realized that the chief meant to have the prize whether he reached the woman first or not.

That meant that he must fight or give in to him.

"If I git there first I'll shoot ther red devil before I'll let him take her," he thought.

The fleeing horsewoman was now lost to view in the clump of alders.

The white scoundrel kept urging his steed, and it being a good one, he rapidly distanced Dead Leaves.

"I'm goin' to win, chief!" he cried. "You may as well give in."

There was no answer to this, but as Buck glanced over his shoulder he saw that there was a look of hate in the Indian's eyes, and that he had drawn a six-shooter.

He surely did not intend to kill the young woman he was racing for?

Then he must mean Buck.

But Buck was now thoroughly worked up.

He, too, drew his revolver.

Into the clump of alders the two dashed, Buck well in the lead.

A cry of triumph escaped the lips of the white man just then.

The young woman's horse had stumbled and sent her over its head to the ground.

She was in the act of rising to her feet to run away when a pistol cracked and a bullet went through the top of Buck Wood's hat.

He knew where the shot came from, and turning in the saddle, he pointed his revolver at the breast of Dead Leaves and pulled the trigger.

The death cry came to the lips of the young chief, and he fell from the saddle, dead.

"Now, then, you putty dear!" called out the scoundrel, "I guess you are mine. Stop your runnin'. I ain't goin' to hurt you."

But the girl had seen him dealing bullets to her people along with the Sioux, and uttering a scream, she ran all the faster.

But Buck swept down on her like the wind.

"Stop runnin', I say," he exclaimed.

"Never, you fiend in human form!" she answered.

"Well, I'll have to catch yer, then. Here goes!" and reining in his horse he dismounted and rushed toward the girl.

She had made a brave fight and lost, but she was determined that she would not be taken alive by the scoundrel.

Whipping a revolver from her breast she placed the muzzle to her temple and pulled the trigger.

Crack! The sharp report rang out and Buck Wood's prize fell to the ground, dead.

As the villain realized what had happened a feeling of terror came over him.

The young woman he had raced for was dead, and so was Dead Leaves, the young chief.

What would Gray Elk do to him when he found this out?

"He'll kill and scalp me, as sure as fate!" he gasped. "I guess ther best thing I kin do is to make for Fort Bridger, an' keep out of ther way of ther Sioux after this."

He at once mounted and headed for the fort.

CHAPTER XI.

CONCLUSION.

Young Wild West and Cheyenne Charlie had covered about twenty miles without meeting a single Indian, but after that their troubles began.

Almost before they were aware of it, they ran plump into a party of about a dozen stragglers.

A sharp fight ensued, in which Charlie's horse was shot from under him.

"Go on!" cried the brave scout, who had also received a wound in the thigh. "Make your escape, Wild! You have

a pretty little gal over at Bridger to live for. Go on! I'll hold 'em off as long as I kin."

"Give me your hand!" exclaimed Young Wild West, just as though he had not heard the words of his friend at all. "Get up here with me. Spitfire is strong and full of life, and will carry us to a place of safety."

The murderous Sioux were coming closer and closer to them all the time, and when they saw that one of the horses was down they thought they had the palefaces beyond a shadow of doubt.

Cheyenne Charlie felt sure that there was no chance for both of them to be saved, so he tried to pull away from the grasp of his friend.

"No, no!" he protested. "You are younger than I am. You have got a little gal who worships the ground you walk on. Go on back to her while you have the chance. Why, she'd cry her eyes out if you was to go under. An' me—why, no one would think about me long after I was dead."

"Stop!" thundered Wild, in a voice that Cheyenne Charlie had never heard him speak in before. "Get up here, Charlie! Get up, I say!"

Somehow the scout felt that he must obey, and he did so.

Young Wild West gave Spitfire a crack with the bridle rein, something he had never done before, and the spirited animal darted away like the wind.

Bullets flew around them like hail, but they must have borne charmed lives, for none hit them.

At the end of half an hour they reached a clump of woods which stood like an island on the vast expanse of prairie.

Cheyenne Charlie's wound was worse than he at first thought and was paining him something fearful.

The noble horse which had left the Indians far behind needed a rest, and as soon as he had assisted his companion to the ground he petted and stroked him, as though apologizing for striking him.

And the horse seemed to understand, for, as was his custom, he rubbed his nose against the boy's face and gave a low whinny.

For ten minutes they rested, and then once more Wild started to assist Charlie to the horse's back.

"It's no use," the scout said. "I kin hear 'em comin', an' there's no chance for the two of us. You are the one to go. Leave me here. Maybe they'll pass me by unnoticed."

"Come on!"

Again that commanding tone rang out, and once more Cheyenne Charlie obeyed it.

With the double burden on his back, the sorrel started off as though he was fresh. When Wild said he was strong and full of life he told the truth.

And so it continued throughout the long night.

After a while the pursuing Indians gave up the chase, and they were fortunate enough not to meet with any others.

When the sun arose the guns of Fort Bridger were in sight, and when Cheyenne Charlie set eyes on them he fainted from pain and loss of blood.

When Young Wild West rode up to the fort with the form

of the scout in his arms he looked as though he had been bathed in a sea of blood.

Two arrows were sticking in the sleeves of his coat, and there was a bullet hole in his collar.

But the blood upon him was not his own. It was from the Indians he had been in contact with and that which had flowed from Charlie's wound.

The scout was at once placed under the care of a surgeon, and Wild saw to the comfort of his faithful horse, and then indulged in a good wash.

Arietta, pale, but now beaming with joy, brought his breakfast to him.

He told her the story of the great ride and how they had run the gauntlet.

Then the commandant came over, and he was compelled to relate it to him.

Everybody voted it a wonderful escape, and the words of praise that the daring rider and his plucky horse got were many.

"You must give up fighting Indians, Wild," said Arietta, when they were alone.

"I don't know how I can," he replied, as he leaned back, weary from his awful experience.

"But you must."

"Arietta, haven't I told you that my father and mother and sister were killed by the red demons?"

"Yes, and so were my mother and father. But you don't want to be killed by them, do you?"

"Oh, no! I'm not going to be just yet, either. But, by the way, where is that charm you were going to make for me?"

"I have it with me now, but I won't give it to you unless you will promise me to give up being an Indian fighter."

"Nonsense! If I wore the charm I would come out unscathed every time."

The girl took something from the pocket of her skirt.

It was in the shape of a heart and had a silk cord attached to it.

"Here is the charm," she said. "Now, promise me you will not run in needless danger again with the Indians."

"I will promise you that, little one. Thank you for the charm."

Wild examined it carefully. It was very pretty and neatly made.

"Why, it is made of human hair partly," said Wild. "Whose scalp did you use, Arietta?"

"That hair is a lock I cut from my own head," she replied. "The beads and doeskin, which form the rest of the material used, were given to me by the old squaw I told you about. They are charmed beads, she said."

"Well, I will wear it not for the sake of the charmed beads, but for the sake of the lock of hair," and before Arietta knew it the handsome young fellow had pulled her to him and pressed a kiss on her lips.

After that it got noised about among their most intimate friends that they were engaged.

But as neither would admit that such was the case, it was not known to be a fact.

There were stirring times during the next two weeks.

The combined forces of the Indians advanced upon the settlement near the fort, but were driven back with great loss after a fight of many hours.

That broke the backbone of the uprising, but in the few weeks many a noble white man went down before the savages' tomahawk, and many an Indian was sent to the happy hunting grounds by the white man's bullet.

After the trouble was over for a time, and they felt it was safe to venture out of the range of the guns of the fort, some of the settlers concluded to go back to the Forks.

The cabins had been left standing, strange to say, which must certainly have been an oversight on the part of the Indians.

But old Sam Murdock said it was no oversight; he believed that the Sioux had left the cabins standing so the

owners would go back and occupy them, and thus give them a chance to finish what they had been trying for—to make a regular massacre of it.

"I ain't goin' back," said he. "I'm goin' to take my granddaughter an' go to ther hills. I want to make something to leave her when I peg out, and there's ther place for me to do it."

So one fine day not long after that a wagon train left Fort Bridger on its way to the gold diggings.

Did Young Wild West go? Well, we will tell you about it in the next number.

THE END.

Read "YOUNG WILD WEST'S LUCK; OR, STRIKING IT RICH AT THE HILLS," which will be the next number (2) of "Wild West Weekly."

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